

Selling new products

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Selling New Products

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Selling New Products

PROEFSCHRIFT

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prof.dr. E.J. Nijssen

Copromotor:
dr. A. de Jong

“Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good.

It's the thing you do that makes you good.”

— Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success*

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Chapter 1: *Introduction*

This introduction explains the importance of extending our knowledge regarding new product selling and outlines the aim of this dissertation. It also it explains the rationale for engaging in three studies. While the first and second study address the issues of how sales managers and employees can combine the sale of new and existing products in general and in retail context, study 3 examines the role of the composition of functional sales teams for individual salespersons' performance. This chapter concludes with an outline of the remainder of this thesis.

“For every dollar spent on generating an idea, ten dollars have to be spent on ‘research’ to convert it into a new discovery or a new invention. For every dollar spent on ‘research,’ at least a hundred dollars need to be spent on development, and for every hundred dollars spent on development, something between a thousand and 10,000 dollars are needed to introduce and establish a new product or a new business on the market”

—Peter Drucker (1973, p. 785)

1.1. New Product Selling: A Strategic Imperative

As we proceed into the 21st century, companies are facing increasingly complex and dynamic business environments. Many organizations have to deal with intense competition as more products are introduced faster, with shorter life cycles, and less competitive differentiation (Rackham and DeVincentis 1999). Consequently, companies are pushed to not only be more adept in product development but also in capitalizing on these innovative activities. For example, while companies on average generate 28% of their total sales with the sale of new products (Barczak et al. 2009), some successful companies, such as Philips, realize more sales with new products than with existing products in their product portfolio.

This increasingly competitive business landscape raises important issues for many organization’s new product development and commercialization capabilities. In the past decades both scholars and practitioners have focused on new product development processes within companies, unraveling why some companies are more adept in, for instance, quickly bringing products to market than other companies (Page and Schirr 2008). Based on the outcomes of these explorations many companies have professionalized their new product development processes and reduced cycle-times for new product development projects by using more formal and cross-functional approaches (Barczak et al. 2009). However, the same research shows that “success rates and efficiencies (projects started per commercial success) remain stable, although new products are contributing a lower percentage of revenues and profits than previously” (Barczak et al. 2009, p. 14). Or otherwise stated, while companies have become more successful in inventing and developing

new products, they still need to step up their efficacy in capitalizing on these activities. Indeed, new product launch failure rates range from 33% to over 60%—and have not improved (Barczak et al. 2009; Boulding et al. 1997; McMath and Forbes 1998; Wind 1982).

The commercialization phase is perceived as the most hazardous phase during the new product development process because it stands for the largest investment in terms of capital, time, and attention (Fu et al. 2010). Even if the new product is successful, companies may not benefit financially given these high costs (Pauwels and Silva-Risso 2004). Consistent with this, Leslie and Holloway (2006, p. 2) note, “the biggest risk for most companies has shifted from getting the product to work to getting it to market,” making the commercialization of new products a strategic imperative in many companies (Moore 2007).

Although commercialization sometimes is referred to as the complete process of acquiring ideas, developing and manufacturing saleable goods, and selling the goods in a market (Cooper 2000; Cooper 1993; Mitchell and Singh 1996), a more narrow definition associates with the “implementation phase” or the introduction and launching of new products in the market. It typically involves activities such as market launch, product training, after-sales support, and monitoring of competitors’ reactions (Ernst et al. 2010; Song and Parry 1992). New product launch comprises of three distinct decision-making activities necessary to successfully bring a product to its target market—residing at the strategic, tactical, and operational level. These will be discussed next.

During product commercialization, strategic activities and decision-making are the prime responsibility of top management who oversees the what, where, when, and why to launch (Hultink et al. 1997). These activities take place early in the innovation process and deal with product, market, competitive, and firm strategy (Cooper 1993; Hultink et al. 1997). Tactical launch decisions are often covered by the marketing department and deal with the how of the launch and generally involve adjustments to the marketing mix (Hultink et al. 1997). Important questions pertain to the pricing of the new product, how it will be branded, which advertisement and promotion resources will be allocated, and how the new product will be distributed.

Finally, at the operational level sales generally takes the lead coordinating activities and decision-making such as developing the sales model, training the sales force, developing sales strategy and preparing sales pitches, identifying key-decision-makers, submitting bids, education customers on the new product, communicating value, expediting orders, providing after-sales support, and visiting prospects (Biemans 2010; Leslie and Holloway 2006). Yet, empirical research on product launch focused mainly on strategic and tactical issues largely neglecting the operational component (Page and Schirr 2008). Indeed, as Ahearne et al. (2010b, p. 764) note: “Given that a typical new product’s success depends on the success of the sales force in selling the product, the lack of research in this area is surprising.”

Given the academic and practical relevance of the operational process of new product selling, more insight regarding sales persons’ influence on new product acceptance in the market place is welcome. Because the practice of new product selling is still poorly understood (Ahearne et al. 2010b) and the current state of literature provides little guidance, a broad systematic review of the body of new product selling literature and related literature is a good starting point. It will provide an overview and areas of progress and can help identify gaps.

This remainder of this introductory chapter is structured as follows: First, we discuss two relevant streams of research that together might be considered to form the basis for studies on new product selling. Following this, a systematic review of current research on new product selling is provided. In doing so, we consider the emerging body of research on new product selling and conclude with the most relevant research directions. Based on this review, we provide the objective for this research based on the gaps identified in the literature review. We conclude with the contribution and an outline of the separate studies.

1.2. Research Background

Two research domains are particularly relevant for new product selling, namely (1) personal selling and sales management research and (2) new product development research. We briefly introduce these streams before we focus and review the subset of new product selling literature.

First, personal selling and sales management research consider new products selling as only one activity within a differentiated set of activities required to obtain sales targets such as prospecting for new customers (Riordan et al. 1977; Strout 2003), influencing decision-makers to consider and eventually purchase their offerings (McFarland et al. 2006; Spiro and Weitz 1990), retaining existing customers (Reinartz et al. 2004), and helping colleagues (Podsakoff et al. 2000). In general, this research does not differentiate between the sale of new and current products in the product portfolio. Although this literature has examined individual-level customer-directed selling perspectives (Franke and Park 2006) and has produced valuable insights into variance in sales performance, it does not account for the alleged idiosyncratic aspects of the new product selling process. Thus, although potentially enhancing knowledge about antecedents and outcomes of individual selling behaviors, this research contributes little to our understanding of more strategic dilemmas associated with new product selling processes—i.e., role of portfolio management or organizational goals.

Recently, this research was extended to sales teams and used this as relevant unit of analysis (Weitz and Bradford 1999). It occurred in recognition of the fact that sales people with different levels of skills and experiences can benefit from working together to perform better in this challenging task (Ahearne et al. 2010a). Team-selling facilitates individual performance as larger and more complex tasks can be dealt with by means of task division and integration. In addition, given the larger pool of resources available within the team uncertainty is more easily reduced and synergies may accrue from interpersonal learning—which seems especially important for new product selling. One problem that salespeople experience during the sale of new products is the uncertainty regarding aspects such as product features, customer needs, and adequate selling approaches (Atuahene-Gima 1997). A team may lower uncertainty because team members can share relevant product information, give advice about customer needs, and back each other up during difficulties. However, this stream of literature also warns for the costs of working in teams as, for instance, members have to allocate their sparse resources amongst both task-oriented activities (e.g. selling the new product) and team-oriented activities

(e.g., helping teammates with the sale of new products) (Ahearne et al. 2010a; Weitz and Bradford 1999). Research shows that sales teams are important vehicles for unit and organizational performance (Ahearne et al. 2010a; Podsakoff et al. 2000), however it remains unclear how it facilitates or hinders individual performance.

Second, another literature stream relevant to consider is the NPD literature because commercialization, including sales, is the last stage of the NPD process. Hence, it seems important to explain how new product selling relates to but also differs from the vast body of research on new product development. New product selling can be included under the commercialization phase of the new product development process. Some studies within the domain of new product development research have focused on the commercialization phase, but the main emphasis is on the concept and development phases in the new product development process (Page and Schirr 2008; Slotegraaf and Atuahene-Gima 2011). Studies that consider the commercialization phase predominantly deal with marketing related decisions such as pricing and targeting (Hultink and Robben 1999; Langerak et al. 2004; Lee and O'Connor 2003a; Lee and O'Connor 2003b), and not with sales issues. Furthermore, new product development research often deals with cross-functional teams (Griffin and Hauser 1992). Cross-functional teams are important during the conceptualization and development phases; it seems, however, less important during the commercialization phase where new products often directly become part of the regular portfolio of products (Fu et al. 2010). Furthermore, most sales teams are functional in nature consisting of salespeople with similar functional backgrounds (Homburg et al. 2002). Finally, the unit of analysis in most new product development literature is the new product, the development process, business unit, or the firm (Page and Schirr 2008). Yet, from a new product selling perspective it seems more relevant to consider the new products within a salesperson's total product portfolio (Ahearne et al. 2010b; Fu et al. 2010). Because most salespeople have the challenge to allocate their scarce resources along an array of products rather than one product, this is an important perspective for study.

In sum, although the literatures on personal selling and sales management and new product development have developed into large bodies of empirical knowledge,

little is known about the idiosyncratic nature of new product selling, that is characterized by high levels of uncertainty regarding customer demand, appropriate sales procedures, and product features (Atuahene-Gima 1997). As a result, more research on this topic is needed.

1.3. Review of New Product Selling (NPS) Literature

Our review focuses on the recent and still modest new product selling literature. We have considered articles, published between 1987 and 2011, explicitly dealing with the role of the sales force in new product selling. We also considered articles that discussed the importance of the sales force at large during the new product development process. We explain the criteria used for the literature review next.

Method. We adopted a three stages strategy to explore and select the articles. First, we carried out a computerized search by using multiple keywords (e.g., ‘new product,’ ‘sales force,’ ‘innovation,’ ‘commercialization,’ ‘salespeople’) in five databases, namely ABI/INFORMS of Proquest, ScienceDirect of Elsevier, JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar. To be considered for inclusion a study had to: (1) deal with new product commercialization, (2) explicitly mention the sales force as a determinant of success, and (3) be published in a peer-reviewed academic journal or a high ranking management journal (e.g., Harvard Business Review). We excluded studies regarding new product adoption by customers. We included management journals because authors in these articles tend to discuss timely managerial issues and may serve as an important indicator for emerging peer-reviewed academic research.

In the second stage, we systematically searched all the articles (i.e., read titles and abstracts) published between 1997 and 2011 in six renowned journals in the marketing, innovation, and management fields, namely *Journal of Marketing (JM)*, *Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management (JPIM)*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS)*, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management (JPSSM)*, and *Harvard Business Review (HBR)*. Finally, we manually explored all the reference lists of the articles retrieved after the first two steps. By doing so, we identified 24 articles published in marketing

journals (i.e., *Journal of Marketing (JM)*, *Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS)*, *European Journal of Marketing (EJM)*, *Industrial Marketing Management (IMM)*, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice (JMTP)*, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management (JPSSM)*, *Journal of Product & Brand Management (JPBM)*), innovation journals (i.e., *Journal of Product Innovation Management (JPIM)*), and management journals (i.e., *Journal of Business Review (JBR)*, *Harvard Business Review (HBR)*).

Based on topic and content on the one hand and level of abstraction on the other the articles are divided in 3 categories focusing on (1) strategic management of the sales force during new product introductions, (2) the role sales in the new product development process, and (3) operational new product selling activities executed by sales representatives, respectively.

Results. Table 1-1 presents a summary of the three groups. We now discuss these groups in more detail. It provides a good understanding of the state of the art in each sub-domain.

Group 1 concerns approaches of managing the sales force during new product introductions. This stream of research deals with mainly strategic issues at the business unit or company level. Early research by Rochford and Wotubra (1996) shows that successful sales management approaches (e.g., targets and compensation) are adjusted during new product introductions. Later research has indicated that its effect depends on the newness of the product (Micheal et al. 2003). More recently, Leslie and Holloway (2006) claimed that new product selling has become a strategic issue because many companies are proficient in developing new products but fail to benefit from these activities. Moore (2007) even argues that new product selling activities should be separated from existing product selling activities given the differences in goals, incentive structures, and selling approaches. In sum, this research primarily considers the commercialization of new products as a strategic management issue. Because new products are important for long-term sustainability but existing products generate cash to support current activities, it is important to consider whether these activities can and should be integrated.

Group 2 involves new product development research and literature, focusing on

new product development and launch processes. The sales force often is considered as just one of the actors involved in this new product development process. Several authors argue the sales force being a critical factor during new product development and subsequent launch in the market (Di Benedetto 1999). For instance, Cooper and Kleinschmidt (1987) state that the new product's success depends on the sales force's established customer and channel relationships. More recently, Ernst, Hoyer, and Rübsaamen (2010) have investigated the impact of cooperation between marketing, R&D, and sales across different new product development stages on outcomes. They find that while the sales force is also important during the concept and product development stages (e.g., align new product ideas with current customer needs and provide customers during the testing phase), it especially has as a leading role during product commercialization. In this phase sales is responsible for coordinating market launch, monitoring competitors' reactions, and identifying and contacting customers most likely to buy the new product. In short, studies have mainly emphasized the role of the sales force during product commercialization, while research has paid little attention to the role of sales force during earlier stages of the NPD process and the cooperation of sales with other departments during the NPD process.

Group 3 focuses on the individual salesperson's commitment to new product selling. This largest group of studies is accumulating rapidly. It subscribes to Atuahene-Gima's (1997, p. 500) observation "that successful customer adoption of a new product depends on the degree of its adoption by the sales force." Over the years, several factors have been considered as determinants of sales representatives' involvement in new product selling activities. Examples are beliefs about the new product (Ahearne et al. 2010b), attitudes towards the new product (Fu et al. 2010), manager behaviors (Wieseke et al. 2008), control systems (Atuahene-Gima and Li 2002), and market factors (Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). The empirical findings of the twelve empirical studies in this group are based on eight unique datasets. Of these datasets only five cover salesperson performance in new product selling. All these studies consider task-related activities for the sale of new products

Table 1-1: Overview of New Product Selling Literature

Authors (year)	Scientific Approach	Research Context	Level/unit of Analysis	Dimensions Discussed	Main Focus/ Key Statements
GROUP 1: Research on Strategic Management of Sales Force during New Product Introduction					
Leslie & Holloway (2006)	Conceptual	-	New product launch strategy	Learning curve, new product strategy, learning processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identifies reasons for new product failure. -Describes how to manage new product launch.
Moore (2006)	Conceptual	-	Company strategy	Time horizons, best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Describes new product failures from perspective of time-horizons. Suggests six best-practices.
Rochford & Wotubra (1996)	Empirical	Sample of 112 sales managers of U.S. firms (B2B & B2C)	Sales management strategy	Sales management mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Explores impact of changes in sales management mix on new product success. -More frequent changes in sales force quotas correlates with higher performance.
Michael, Rochford & Wotubra (2003)	Empirical	187 firms from national list of Australian manufacturing firms (B2B)	Sales management strategy	Sales management mix, product newness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sales management changes during new product launch depends on degree of newness of product.
GROUP 2: Research on Role Sales in New Product Development Process					
Cooper and Kleinschmidt (1987)	Empirical	Survey, 203 new products from 125 industrial product firms (B2B)	New product development process	Product factors, market factors, intra-firm capabilities and processes; top management support, performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Explores why some new products fail and others succeed. -When launching new products use existing access to established customer and channel relationships of the sales force to launch new product lines.
DiBenedetto (1999)	Empirical	Survey, 183 PDIMA practitioners members (B2B & B2C)	New product launch process	Skills, resources, and strategic launch activities, performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identifies the most critical strategic, tactical, and information-gathering activities -Selling effort and the technical support to sales force training, managing the distribution channel, and timing the launch were all perceived to be conducted significantly better in the most successful cases.
Ernst, Hoyer, & Rübssaamen (2010)	Empirical	424 surveys from sales, marketing, & R&D personnel of 106 NPD projects across 36 firms in Germany (B2B & B2C)	NPD development process	Cross-functional cooperation, performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cooperation between sales and R&D and sales and marketing has positive effect on overall NPD project performance. -Effect of cooperation on performance varies over stages of NPD process.
Joshi (2010)	Empirical	Sample of 149 Canadian product managers (B2B)	Product development process	Influence strategies, compliance, trust, performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Explores impact of salesperson in product modification process -Salespersons' influence strategies have positive and negative effect on implementation by product development team.
Judson, Schoenbacher, Gordon, Ridhour, & Weillbaker (2008)	Empirical	Sample of 246 sales managers and directors of U.S. with a business-to-business perspective (B2B)	New product development process	Actors, communication, information, outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Explores role of salespeople in new products/service development -Many firms do not reward salespeople for involvement in NPD process.

Table 1-1: Continued

Authors (Year)	Scientific Approach	Research Context	Level/unit of Analysis	Dimensions Discussed	Main Focus/Key Statements
GROUP 3 Research on Salespersons in New Product Selling					
Ahearne, Rapp, Hughes, & Jindal (2010)	Empirical	Longitudinal study of 226 salespeople and 428 customers of a mid-sized pharmaceutical company (B2B)	Salesperson	Perceptions, experience, effort, control system, performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Favorable salesperson perceptions yields less effort on new product. •Behavior based control systems constrain salesperson's ability to appropriately allocate effort across customer base.
Anderson and Robertson (1995)	Empirical	208 salespeople of several cooperating firms in the financial service industry (B2B & B2C)	Salesperson	Individual characteristics, manager characteristics, customer factors, adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examines the adoption of house brands by professional service salespeople. •Salespeople may resist selling house brands next to their existing (outside) lines.
Atuahene-Gima (1997)	Conceptual	-	Salesperson	New product adoption, dysfunctional behaviors, salesperson characteristics, organizational factors, sales control system, manager support, outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Salesperson's new product adoption is critical to new product acceptance by customers. •Develops conceptual framework for exploring the characteristics that affect new-product adoption by the sales force.
Atuahene-Gima & Micheal (1998)	Empirical	Sample of 118 salespersons of Australian firms (B2B & B2C)	Salesperson	Effort, product factors, individual factors, environmental factors, outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examines the influence of effort on job satisfaction and performance in sale of new products. •Explores moderating factors (product, individual, and environmental)
Atuahene-Gima & Li (2002)	Empirical	Sample of 157 Chinese and 190 U.S. salespersons of high-technological firms (B2B & B2C)	Salesperson	Trust, sales controls, supervisor behaviors, outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Explores antecedents and outcomes of supervisee trust in context of new product selling. •Different effects are found in U.S. and Chinese sample.
Atuahene-Gima & Li (2006)	Empirical	Sample of 170 Chinese salespersons of high-technological firms (B2B & B2C)	Salesperson	Control mechanisms, supervisory factors, environmental factors, product factor, trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examines the relationship between process and output controls and supervisee trust in new product selling context. •Explores moderating impact of product, supervisory, and environmental factors. •Process and output controls have differentiated effects on supervisee trust.
Fu (2009)	Empirical	Longitudinal study of 314 salespeople of a large tooling company operating in U.S. & Canada (B2B)	Salesperson	Age, experience, goal setting, performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Explores growth trajectory of new product in first 15 months after its launch. •Experience has positive effect on performance, while age has a negative effect.
Fu, Jones, & Bolander (2008)	Empirical	Time-lagged study of 439 and 362 salespeople of a large company in the construction and building maintenance industry operating in U.S. & Canada (B2B)	Salesperson	Product innovativeness, customer newness, intention to sell new product, performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examines the impact of selling intentions on new product performance. •Intentions mediate relationship between product innovativeness, customer newness and selling performance for new products.

Table 1-1: Continued

Authors (year)	Scientific Approach	Research Context	Level/unit of Analysis	Dimensions Discussed	Main Focus/ Key Statements
GROUP 3 Continued					
Fu, Richards, Hughes, & Jones (2010)	Empirical	Longitudinal study within a large tool company operating in U.S. & Canada. 308 and 226 salespeople responded for product A (new-to-world) & B (line-extension), respectively (B2B)	Salesperson	Attitudes, subjective norms, self-efficacy, intentions, performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Develops new product selling model based on theory of planned behavior. •Distinguishes between new-to-market product and line-extension. •Managerial challenge to motivate salespeople to allocate resources on new product selling given considerable degree of autonomy. •Examines effect of goal setting on salesperson effort and new product sales. •Non-linear effect between self-set goals and selling effort.
Fu, Richards, & Jones (2009)	Empirical	Longitudinal study of 143 salespeople of a large company in the construction and building maintenance industry operating in U.S. & Canada (B2B)	Salesperson	Self-set goals, assigned goals, self-efficacy, effort, performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examines the effects on new-product adoption on new product performance. •Impact of adoption is contingent on internal marketing, outcome based controls, training, and field attention. •Explores whether retailer buyer's selection of new products is influenced by their relationship with the inter-firm and buyer-salesperson relationships. •Develops conceptual model of salespeople's reluctance to sell radically new products
Huilink & Atuahene-Gima (2000)	Empirical	Sample of 97 Dutch salespersons (B2B & B2C)	Salesperson	Adoption, sales controls, market volatility, supervisory factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Indicates that new product often fail in the market, regardless of initial enthusiasm among salespeople. •New product launches should not focus on new product features but more on how the new product satisfies customer needs.
Kaufman, Jayachandran, and Rose (2006)	Empirical	210 evaluations made by retail buyers at two U.S. grocery retailers (B2C)	Buyer-salesperson relationships; Manufacturer-retailer relationship	Buyer-firm and buyer-salesperson relationship, product attractiveness, acceptance of new product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Examines the role of expected customer demand (ECD) in salespeople's new brand adoption. •Results indicate that the influence of sales manager's brand adoption on salesperson's brand adoption is stronger if salesperson's ECD is low.
Kauppiia Rajala, & Jyrämä (2010)	Conceptual		Salesperson	Reluctance to sell new product, individual characteristics, organizational characteristics, sales control	
Rackham (1998)	Conceptual	Three cases and personal experience	Salesperson	New product launch	
Wieseke, Homburg, & Lee (2008)	Empirical	Sample of 156 sales managers and 391 sales employees of a large German travel agency franchise system (B2C)	Sales manager & sales employee	Expected customer demand, brand attributes, brand adoption	

Notes: PDMA = Product Development and Management Association; B2B = Business-to-business context; B2C = Business-to-consumer context

only. However recent studies take a broader perspective on new product selling by also considering the direct context of the salesperson (e.g., including subjective norms; Fu et al. 2010). Overall the empirical findings highlight the importance of considering the individual salesperson as the unit of analysis when studying new product commercialization success in both business-to-business (B2B) settings as business-to-consumer (B2C) settings. Now that we have acquired a clear overview of the status quo of new product selling research we can identify research directions. This is discussed in the next section.

1.4. Major Research Directions in the New Product Selling Research

Consistent with Ahearne et al. (2010b) and Zablah et al. (2012) our literature review shows that many challenges remain. We identify two major research directions based on the above review.

First, it is not common to distinguish between selling research for new and existing products. While some studies have taken a comparative perspective, contrasting radical new products with line-extensions (Fu et al. 2010), little is known on how to combine, for instance, the sale of new with that of existing products. The sale of new products clearly deviates from the sale of existing products. In contrast to the latter, the former relates to more uncertainty in terms of market demand (Ahearne et al. 2010b), different selling procedures (Atuahene-Gima 1997), and higher levels of sales effort (Fu et al. 2009). In addition, incentive systems may not adequately compensate for the extra effort devoted to the sale of new products (Ahearne et al. 2010b; Atuahene-Gima 1997; Rochford and Wotruba 1996). Given that in many sales settings new and existing products are sold by the same salesperson it is important to understand when and how both activities can be combined.

Managers may play a decisive role in orchestrating a multitude of sales activities, directing salespersons towards the most promising and important selling opportunities, since they often possess a better overview of the complete task context and are better informed about the company's product strategy (Marinova et al. 2008). Therefore, a valid question is how managers can overcome trade-offs

between more explorative activities (e.g., selling new products or searching new customers) and more exploitative activities (e.g., selling existing products or retaining existing customers) and when these activities can and should be combined? Potential studies in this domain could consider how aspects such as customer involvement, product newness, or intra-firm capabilities influence the usefulness of integrating new and existing product selling.

Second, the extant conceptual and empirical work on new product selling has primarily considered the individual salesperson but has hardly considered the broader organizational, social, and psychological context in which individual salespersons perform their sales task and how this affects their performance. One essential organizational structure is the sales team. Recent evidence shows that more than 75% of companies use a team-based model for organizing their sales (Ahearne et al. 2010a; Cummings 2007). Consideration of the team-context seems especially relevant during the sale of products “since the selling process is beyond the capabilities of any one individual and may require a coordinated effort across products, sales regions, functional groups, and divisions” (Workman et al. 2003, p. 3). Teamwork is even more critical when it concerns the sale of newly developed products that often lack established procedures and stable market demand (Ahearne et al. 2010b; Fu et al. 2010). In such situations the use of team-based structures seems imperative to boost individual performance. It is a consequence of the little follow up that was given to Atuahene-Gima’s (1997, p. 5) suggestion to study new product selling “at multiple level[s] of analyses such as individual, sales team, and the firm’s entire sales force.” Future research should particularly investigate the costs and benefits of team based structures during new product selling and how this is affected by the team’s composition (e.g., diversity in knowledge and skills) and process.

In sum, previous research has neglected the wider task and social context in which sales people sell new products. More specifically, by considering the task context (i.e., new versus established products) and the social context (i.e., managers, sales team, organization) researchers can build more comprehensive models of new product selling.

1.5. Aim and Contributions

In this dissertation we focus on the performance of salespeople selling new products. A central feature of the sales function involves its strong relationship with the broader context—both internal and external to the company. The separate chapters clearly discuss the relevant literature, their objectives, and their theoretical as well as their managerial implications in relation to different relevant performance parameters in different sales settings. Nevertheless, it is of fundamental importance to explicitly delineate the outline of the overall objective of this dissertation and how the aims of the different chapters are related to the key objective.

The objective of this dissertation is twofold as it aims *to investigate in how far salesperson's new product selling behaviors and performance are influenced by the a) task-related context and b) social-related context in which the sale of new products takes place*. Consistent with this, we examine how managers can promote salespeople to combine the sale of new and existing products and how team-based settings influence an individual's performance.

To address these two objectives effectively, we address them from different perspectives. Consistent with the first research direction identified in section 1.4, Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the concurrent sale of new and existing products—yet within different selling contexts being the business-to-business and retail context respectively. In a business-to-business environment, conflicts between the sale of new and existing products are likely to originate from differences in the sales process and trade-offs in resource allocation; in retail settings trade-offs are more likely to be rooted in conflicting demand between downstream (e.g., manufacturers) and upstream (e.g., retail managers) players in the supply chain. The third study (Chapter 4), examines the impact of functional sales teams on individual performance. We focus on industrial sellers working in the ICT-industry dealing with dynamic and complex sales cycles. In such selling environments, teams seem particularly decisive for individual performance. We formulate specific purposes for the different chapters in the next sections.

1.5.1. Objectives Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, we focus on individual salespeople operating in a business-to-business context selling ICT-solutions. In this chapter we conduct comparative research by building a comprehensive model of new and existing product selling activities. Dealing with complex products and customer relationships paradoxes at the front line may occur in terms of resource allocation and task execution when selling new and existing products. In this chapter, we consider the possible deleterious influence of sales managers' modal selling orientation (selling new or existing products) on salespersons' proactive selling behaviors for the neglected product type. The objectives of this chapter are to: 1) *examine the deleterious impacts of sales managers' modal orientations towards either new or existing products on salespersons' proactive selling behaviors of the neglected products type* and 2) *understand the mechanisms that attenuate the deleterious effects caused by modal orientations.*

1.5.2. Objectives Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, we further examine the role of managers' modal selling orientations in a retail context where electronic consumer products are sold to consumers. Sales managers in retail stores have the challenge to combine competing objectives for new and existing product selling such that they can profit from both activities. In contrast to Chapter 2, we focus on how a frontline mechanism can attenuate deleterious effects of a dual or ambidextrous managerial selling orientation on individual sales agents' performance. Furthermore, we take some contingencies into account and: (1) examine the influence of manager performance feedback and (2) the impact of salesperson age. The objectives of chapter 3 are to: 1) *examine whether an ambidextrous selling orientation facilitates or hinders the sales performance of new and existing products respectively, and how it impacts net profit obtainment*, 2) *to examine whether task autonomy mediates the relationship between sales manager orientation and salesperson selling performance*, and 3) *to determine whether the effect of task autonomy on sales performance for new and existing products is contingent on manager performance feedback and salesperson age.*

1.5.3. Objectives Chapter 4

In Chapter 4 we investigate the role of functional sales teams on new product selling performance for salespersons operational in a business-to-business context selling ICT-solutions. In contrast to Chapter 2 and 3, we take a more focused, social perspective and elaborate on the impact of team composition and pro-social behaviors on new product selling performance. We take a contingency perspective as we: (1) examine how team composition affects the team identification-helping relationship and (2) make a distinction between group-level team diversity and individual-level position within the team. The objectives of Chapter 4 are to: 1) *examine how team diversity and individual position within the team jointly affect the pro-social attitude-behavior relationship for team members* and 2) *the impact of helping on both individual sales performance relative to teammates' performance (i.e., individual position on sales performance), as well as on sales performance measured as a distance from colleagues.*

1.6. Outline

This dissertation critically reviews studies in the field on new product selling, and is based on three empirical studies presented in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. Each chapter differs in terms of key concepts, theory, and main research questions. Table 1-2 summarizes the outline of this dissertation.

Table 1-2: Outline of the topics Discussed in this Dissertation

	<i>Chapter 2</i>	<i>Chapter 3</i>	<i>Chapter 4</i>
Key concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager orientation • Proactive selling • Organizational identification • Sales performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager orientation • Task autonomy • Manager performance feedback • Salesperson age • Sales performance • Net profit obtainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping • Team identification • Team diversity • Individual position within team • Expected customer demand • Sales experience • Relative performance • Performance distance
Main research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does a sales manager's singular orientation towards either existing or new products have a deleterious effect on salespeople's proactive selling behaviors of the neglected product type? • Does an ambidextrous orientation attenuate this negative effect? • Does organizational identification attenuate this negative effect? • What is the effect of salesperson's proactive sales of new and existing products on sales performance for new and existing products? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does a sales manager's dual orientation towards existing and new products facilitate or hinder salespeople's selling performance? • Does autonomy mediate this effect? • Does manager performance feedback and salesperson age moderate the effect of autonomy of sales performance? • What is the effect of salesperson's sales performance of new and existing products on total net profit obtainment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does team diversity and individual position within the team jointly affect the prosocial attitude-behavior relationship of team members (i.e., team identification-helping relationship)? • How does helping teammates affect an individual's sales performance relative to that of teammates? • How does helping teammates affect an individual's sales performance distance to teammates?
Theoretical background	Ambidexterity literature Sales literature Identification literature	Ambidexterity literature Sales literature	New product sales literature Team diversity literature Prosocial behaviors Identification literature
Research setting	Business-to-business	Business-to-consumer	Business-to-business
Respondents	154 sales employees nested within 31 teams	104 sales employees	211 sales employees (including 31 sales managers) nested within 32 teams

Chapter 2: *The Perils of Sales Managers' Modal Orientations toward New or Existing Products: Understanding the Buffering Effects of Sales Manager Ambidexterity and Salesperson Organizational Identification*¹

The authors examine the deleterious consequences that a sales manager's modal orientation toward either new or existing products has on salespeople's proactive selling behaviors of the neglected product type. Finding sales manager ambidexterity (i.e., a sales manager's dual orientation toward both new and existing products) and salesperson organizational identification to be mechanisms that buffer this effect, this paper also identifies boundary conditions of the myopia caused by sales managers' modal orientations. Our results further reveal an interesting interplay between these mechanisms showing that the buffering effect of manager ambidextrous orientation depends on the level of salesperson organizational identification. In turn, the authors' two-part empirical study links salespeople's proactive selling behaviors toward new and existing products to their commensurate forms of objective performance and shows that combining these selling behaviors does not impair performance. The results contribute to the literatures on managerial orientations, proactive selling, and organizational identification.

¹ This research was conducted in collaboration with Ad de Jong, Ed Nijssen, and Mike Ahearn. This study was presented at EMAC 2011 Conference, May 24-27, Ljubljana, Slovenia and INFORMS Marketing Science Conference 2010, June 17-19, Cologne, Germany. The authors thank the conference participants for their useful comments. We also thank Jan Wieseke and Martha Chorney for their comments on previous versions of this article. An adapted version of this chapter is under review for publication.

2.1 Introduction

To achieve superior performance, companies often deal with multiple business orientations that potentially conflict (Anderson et al. 1997; Marinova et al. 2008), such as the exploration of new opportunities and the exploitation of existing technologies and competencies (Atuahene-Gima 2005). Firms that are able to simultaneously manage such conflicting orientations tend to outperform their counterparts (Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004; He and Wong 2004; Jansen et al. 2006), often because of their unique ability to integrate short-term and long-term goals effectively (e.g., Sriram and Kalwani 2007). Practicing multiple orientations is also relevant for companies' sales forces. Consider the orientation toward selling new products to ensure a company's next generation of growth and continued survival (Cohen et al. 1997; Okada 2006) and the orientation toward selling existing products to obtain short-term selling objectives and generate cash (Atuahene-Gima 1997). Whereas pursuing the sale of new products at the expense of existing product sales is harmful to a firm's "bread and butter," the opposite scenario poses threats of stagnation and complacency. Therefore, sales organizations that avoid favoring one orientation over the other and, instead, concurrently sell both new and existing products are in the best position to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage.

However, even as companies invest substantial resources in the exploitation of current selling opportunities and the exploration of new ones, the sales forces of renowned companies such as AT&T, Kodak, Polaroid, and Xerox continue to report serious problems (cf. Moore 2007). The concurrent sale of new and existing products is by no means a simple task. Selling new products often requires a long-term-oriented, complex process, which frequently involves commercial risk (Agarwal and Bayus 2002). Especially in B2B contexts, new products constitute a challenging sales process that requires salespeople to bear considerable risks if customers' expectations are not fulfilled (Chesbrough and Rosenbloom 2002). On the contrary, the sale of existing products is usually a routine activity that entails relatively small risks and focuses on the short-term.

Compounding the severity of this issue, strategy formation and implementation

are inherently iterative processes (Cespedes 1991), meaning that sales managers are often inundated with strategic initiatives from top management that inevitably contradict one another. This reality suggests that sales managers are often faced with the decision of whether to emphasize the sale of new or existing product sales to their salespeople. While the extant literature has emphasized the importance of leadership when directing subordinates toward executing particular tasks for strategic reasons (Detert and Burris 2007; Griffin et al. 2007; Parker et al. 2006), it has disregarded the possibility of detrimental effects for other, equally important tasks (Griffin et al. 2007). Therefore, the core contribution of this paper lies in examining the deleterious impacts of sales managers' modal orientation toward either new or existing products has on salespeople's proactive selling behaviors of the neglected product type. Furthermore, we aim to understand mechanisms that attenuate the deleterious effects caused by modal orientations.

In doing so, we conceptualize sales managers' dual orientation toward both types of products to be a facilitative mechanism in the control of sales managers that directs salespeople's attention and proactive selling behaviors toward a company's entire product portfolio. Specifically, we extend prior research on the value of using an ambidextrous orientation by organizations from a strategic management perspective (Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004; He and Wong 2004) to the individual level in a sales context. Alternatively, from a strategic management perspective, we contend that salespeople's organizational identification (OI) may provide a similar mechanism. OI reflects the extent to which individuals perceive oneness with organizational values and vision; it is a hallmark construct, which is deeply ingrained in the minds of employees (Ashforth and Mael 1989). Salespeople who identify strongly with their organization may, then, proactively sell both new and existing products regardless of their sales manager's product orientation in order to maintain the health of their organization, which they consider to be a part of their social identity. To the best of our knowledge, this moderating effect of OI has not been tested before.

2.2 Model Development and Hypotheses

The focal relationship studied herein flows from sales managers' orientations to salespeople's proactive selling behaviors. A sales manager's product orientation refers to his or her practices that direct salespeople's attention, time, and effort toward the sale of a particular set of products in the firm's portfolio. Specifically, we distinguish between a sales manager's orientations toward selling new versus existing products. Products that a firm has held in its product portfolio for more than 12 months represent *existing products*; more recently launched products constitute *new products*.

Proactive behaviors have been defined as the behavioral initiative to improve current work situations in general or to establish new circumstances to achieve the same end (De Jong and De Ruyter 2004). This active approach contrasts with passive or reactive sales behaviors (e.g., Porath and Bateman 2006). So far, research has considered the role of proactive behaviors in general, but little is known about the impact of salespeople's proactive behaviors toward specific selling activities. In a sales setting, both new and existing product selling behaviors are relevant, making it important to distinguish between proactive behaviors expended toward either product category. Proactive behaviors expended toward new products reflect a salesperson's effort to develop and use new approaches and selling methods to achieve sales of new products, update sales methods, and explore opportunities. To sell new products proactively, salespeople must take the initiative to identify opportunities and anticipate emerging customer needs for new products. In contrast, the proactive sale of existing products involves an inclination to identify opportunities for existing products and scan customers' manifest needs and problems.

In our framework, we investigate the influence of sales managers' modal orientations toward the sale of either new or existing products, as well as their interaction, which suggests a dual-focus orientation. This managerial orientation should encourage the proactive sale of new and existing products by salespeople. The ultimate dependent variables, then, are sales performance related to new and existing products (see Figure 2-1).

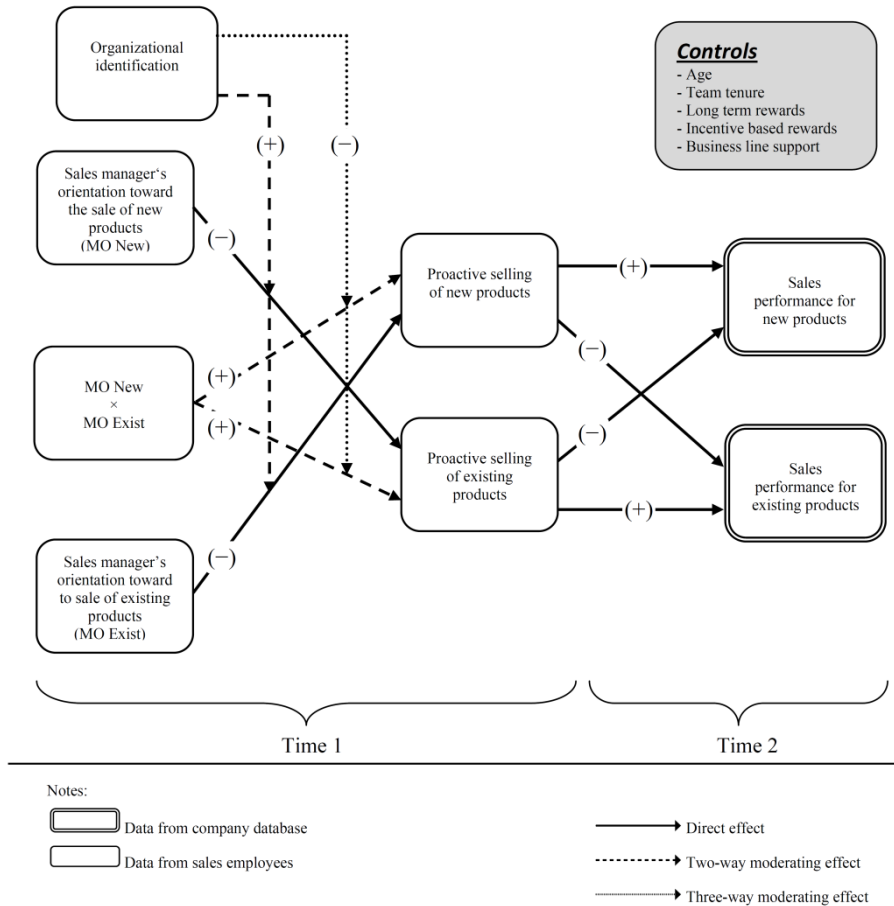


Figure 2-1: Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 The Impact of Modal and Dual Manager Orientations on Salesperson Proactive Selling

Intuitively, one should expect a sales manager's orientation toward the sale of new (existing) products to drive salespeople's proactive selling behaviors toward new (existing) products. This intuition is in line with the extant literature that has considered sales manager orientations to be factors that play an instrumental role in determining salesperson behavior. For instance, Wieseke and colleagues (2008)

report that salespeople are more inclined to adopt a newly developed brand if their sales manager highlights and supports its introduction. Similarly, Fu and colleagues (2010) report that sales managers who develop clear norms and expectations about new product launches are more effective at encouraging salespeople to direct their effort toward the sale of new products. However, what is less understood in the literature is the impact of opposing orientations on their counterparts. In our case, this unresolved question amounts to the impact of a sales manager's orientation toward the sale of new (existing) products on salespeople's existing (new) product proactive sales behaviors.

According to the theory of selective attention, individuals have limited mental capacity with regards to their cognitive resources (cf. Langfred and Moyer 2004). Therefore, as salespeople have limited resources and are selective in what they attend to (Broadbent 1958; Pashler 1998), they are likely to pursue selling tasks that are suggested by their managers, because doing so maximizes the efficiency of their efforts. Importantly, this perspective indirectly suggests that a salesperson's focus on the proactive selling of a certain product type may come at the expense of reduced cognitive effort toward the proactive sale of alternative product types. Thus, a sales manager's orientation toward new products may inhibit salespeople's attention to proactively selling existing products, and vice versa. Jansen and colleagues (2009) provide tangential evidence on this front: they show that leaders who are oriented toward exploratory activities distract their subordinates' attention away from exploitation activities. Therefore, we propose the following two negative crossover effects:

H_{1a}. A sales manager's orientation toward the sale of existing products has a negative effect on salespeople's proactive selling of new products.

H_{1b}. A sales manager's orientation toward the sale of new products has a negative effect on salespeople's proactive selling of existing products.

Although a sales manager's orientation toward the sale of one type of product (e.g., new or existing) should be associated with salespeople's decreased proactive selling of alternative types of products, it is important to note that sales managers are not bounded to one orientation. We refer to sales managers who simultaneously push for the sale of new and existing products as being 'ambidextrous,' because they are able to effectively combine and bridge potentially contradicting orientations (Marinova et al. 2008; Mom et al. 2009). Furthermore, we propose that ambidexterity is likely to play an important role in sales manager-salesperson dyadic relationships to the extent that it may guard organizations from the deleterious effects posited in hypothesis 1.

To form our proposition that salespeople will be receptive to ambidextrous sales managers by means of proactively selling both new and existing products, we adopt a paradoxical cognition perspective. According to this theory, individuals can simultaneously deal with multiple, potentially contradictory activities by using paradoxical cognitive frames, which are mental templates that recognize and accept the simultaneous existence of multiple, potentially contradictory tasks (Smith and Tushman 2005). These frames are not only important for thought, but also for action (Ford and Backoff 1988), which is critical to this study given that proactive selling is a behavioral outcome. Therefore, even though proactively selling new products differs in its very nature from proactively selling existing products, salespeople should be able to engage in both forms of behavior in response to a sales manager's ambidextrous orientation (e.g., Moore 2007).

In addition, we propose that ambidextrous sales managers create a broader overall view of the sales process and that such a perspective provides synergies that allow salespeople to identify multiple selling opportunities. For instance, we expect the subordinates of ambidextrous sales managers to be more persistent when they encounter customers who form objections about either new or existing products. Ambidextrous sales managers emphasize the importance of proposing both new and existing products to customers, a form of influence that should motivate

salespeople's initiative to sell both types of products. Accordingly, we posit:

H_{2a}. A sales manager's dual orientation toward the sale of both new and existing products has a positive interaction effect on salespeople's proactive selling of new products.

H_{2b}. A sales manager's dual orientation toward the sale of both new and existing products has a positive interaction effect on salespeople's proactive selling of existing products.

2.2.2 Organizational Identification: Moderating Influence

Organizational identification (OI) refers to the degree to which an employee embraces organizational goals, values, and beliefs (Dutton et al. 1994). Rooted in social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Tajfel and Turner 1979), this notion reflects a salesperson's psychological state, which consists of cognitive, affective, and evaluative identification or belonging to his or her organization (cf. Bagozzi and Dholakia 2006). While OI has been shown to constitute an important driver of the performance of salespeople (Wieseke et al. 2009), little is known about OI as a moderator.

However, several scholars emphasize that shared organizational values may act as a substitute of leadership variables and reduce the need for a formal leader under certain circumstances (Podsakoff and MacKenzie 1997a). For instance, Den Hartog and colleagues (2007) demonstrate that charismatic leadership has a weaker impact on employee's helping and compliance when employees' "connect" or sense of belongingness with their work group is strong. Substitutes are variables in a leader's environment that diminish a leader's impact on subordinates' attitudes, perceptions, and performance and replace the influence of a leader's behavior with their own (Kerr and Jermier 1978; Podsakoff et al. 1995)

Therefore, OI may create a *buffering* effect that mitigates the deleterious impact of a sales manager's modal orientation toward existing (new) products on salespeople's new (existing) product proactive selling behaviors. The reason is that

high OI may cause some disobedience to sales manager directives. High identifiers accept less manager guidance and are less sensitive to a manager's bias toward either new or existing products because they are more motivated to act on behalf of what is best for overall organizational health. This is consistent with recent suggestions that employees who self-regulate their behavior based on information from a wider variety of organizational sources may be disobedient to their direct supervisor (De Stobbeleir et al. 2011). Consequently, the negative crossover effects of sales managers' modal orientations on the proactive selling of alternative product types should decline when OI is high rather than low. As such, we hypothesize:

H_{3a}. When salespeople's organizational identification increases, the negative effect of their sales manager's orientation toward existing products on their proactive selling of new products weakens

H_{3b}. When salespeople's organizational identification increases, the negative effect of their sales manager's orientation toward new products on their proactive selling of existing products weakens.

Moreover, we extend this argument one step further and specify two three-way interaction effects with respect to OI and dual orientations. We anticipate that employees with low identification are more likely to be influenced by ambidextrous sales managers than their high identification counterparts. That is, we expect the positive interaction effect of a sales manager's dual orientation to be at its greatest magnitude when OI is low, for similar reasons to those stated above: low OI salespeople are likely to be more receptive to their sales manager's dual orientations, making ambidextrous sales managers more powerful sources of influence for low identifiers. Therefore, we predict:

H₄. Organizational identification interacts with a sales manager's dual

orientation in such a way that ambidextrous sales managers will have the most significant, positive impact on salespeople's proactive selling of (a) new products and (b) existing products when salesperson organizational identification is low.

2.2.3 Consequences of Proactive Selling

The final step of our framework (see Figure 2-1) involves the relationship between salespeople's proactive selling and sales performance. Proactiveness by sales and service employees offers an excellent predictor of sales and service outcomes (Challagalla et al. 2009; Crant and Bateman 2000). De Jong and De Ruyter (2004) show specifically that the proactiveness of service recovery workers enhances service revenues. Salesperson proactivity has also been shown to positively affect various types of personal achievements by salespeople (Bateman and Crant 1993), including objective sales performance criteria (Crant 1995; Pitt et al. 2002) (Porath and Bateman 2006; Spiro and Weitz 1990).

Proactive selling increases performance mainly because proactive employees focus their attention on opportunities that are conducive to effective performance (Bateman and Crant 1993; Porath and Bateman 2006). Proactive persons also initiate and sustain efforts that benefit their work environment. For example, they might identify and pursue opportunities for improving their performance by using educational resources and learning new skills (Seibert et al. 1999). Because of the positive effects of *product-specific* sales behaviors on related performance criteria, we expect positive relationships between the proactive sale of existing and new products on specific, congruent performance indicators.

H_{5a}. Proactive selling of new products has a positive effect on new product sales performance.

H_{5b}. Proactive selling of existing products has a positive effect on existing product sales performance.

Finally, given that the theory of selective attention suggests that employees' focal attention to specific activities distracts them from alternative or competing tasks (cf. H₁), we also expect negative crossover effects from product-specific proactive selling behaviors to *incongruent* performance indicators. Therefore, we add:

H_{6a}. Proactive selling of existing products has a negative effect on salespeople's new product sales performance.

H_{6b}. Proactive selling of new products has a negative effect on salespeople's existing product sales performance.

2.3 Empirical Study

2.3.1 Research Setting, Sample, and Procedure

To test our conceptual model, we collected data at a large European information and communication technology (ICT) company that had the strategic objective to (1) sell existing products to obtain short-term goals, such as obtaining quarterly quotas and preserving their position as market leader, and (2) develop and sell new products to deal with long-term developments such as changes in customer needs and competitor moves. The sales force focused on a fixed set of customer accounts (approximately 500 accounts). Hence, the focus is on existing customers in a B2B context.

The company employs approximately 14,000 people and operates in more than 90 countries. Its selling units are relatively independent, strategic, organizational entities that can be treated separately, though by using data from a single firm, we also can control for industry variation and differences in reward structures.

The company under study sells ICT products, such as workspace management systems, connectivity solutions, and datacenters. These products have short life cycles and many new products are launched overtime, requiring sales force attention

and effort to capitalize on current activities and explore new innovations (Lu and Yang 2004). The complexity of the sales process makes it such that a sale can take up to six months before a deal is made. Twenty-four percent of total annual revenue is obtained through the sale of new products and it takes 3.5 years on average for the entire product portfolio to be replaced.

We collected data from two sources over two periods. First, salesperson data were collected by means of a survey. We collected data from the firm's sales employees using an Internet-based questionnaire, as provided by 154 of 244 employees (response rate = 63%) from 31 units. Second, we collected each salesperson's sales performance for new and existing product selling activities from company records that were obtained 6 months after the questionnaire had been distributed.

2.3.2 Sampling and Measurement

The development of salesperson survey measures began with a review of the relevant literature and exploratory qualitative grounding exercises. We conducted in-depth interviews with sales managers, salespeople, and employees of the sales support staff in order to become familiar with the firm and sales setting, as well as to obtain commitment from the organization for this study. We constructed a draft questionnaire and pre-tested it with six company managers and representatives and two industry experts. Following the pretests, we made minor wording adjustments to ensure applicability. Based on the results of the interviews, pre-tests, and industry specific aspects (e.g., average product life-time cycle, average duration of sales process), we defined new products as those products introduced in the last twelve months prior to the survey. We chose this time interval of twelve months, because the company itself said that the success of selling new products can be best assessed over a period of one year.

All study constructs used multiple items and a five-point Likert scale, with 1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree" as anchors. Table 2-1 contains the details of the measures; the information regarding scale reliabilities and other descriptive statistics appears in Tables 2-1 and 2-2.

Sales manager's orientation. In our study, we used salespeople's perceptions of their manager's orientation as the key variable, because within an organizational unit employees' interpretations of managerial decisions and priorities are most appropriate (cf. Marinova et al. 2008). In the absence of scales for directing salesperson attention and effort to sell new versus existing products, we developed new measures. Building on scales developed in the innovation literature that measure firm and manager exploratory and exploitative orientations (e.g., Jansen et al. 2006; Mom et al. 2009) and based on our in-depth interviews with sales managers, salespeople, and support staff, we adapted, tested, and fine-tuned the items. The resulting sales manager orientation scales each consist of five items.

Table 2-1: Scale Items for Construct Measures

<i>Measures</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>	<i>t-Value</i>
Sales manager's orientation toward the sale of new products (n = 5; CR = .82; AVE = .48)		
My sales manager wants us to devote our time and attention primarily to...		
the selling of new products and services in our assortment.	.69	
the development of a sales argument for the new products and services.	.92	9.26
experimenting with the selling tactics for the new products and services.	.75	8.34
the utilization of new selling opportunities for new products.	.58	6.65
spot new, rising needs of customers.	.44	5.12
Proactive selling of new products (n = 5; CR = .94; AVE = .76)		
Within team Y, I am the one who...		
is always taking the initiative in selling <i>new products</i> .	.84	
does not give up easily when encountering a customer to whom it is difficult to sell <i>new products</i> .	.86	13.35
always anticipates potential problems with selling <i>new products</i> .	.85	13.14
is constantly on the lookout to identify opportunities to sell <i>new products</i> .	.91	14.69
actively scans the need for <i>new products</i> .	.90	14.61
Organizational identification (n = 6; CR = .87; AVE = .52)		
When someone criticizes 'company X', it feels like a personal insult.	.69	
I am very interested in what others think about 'company X'.	.64	7.36
When I talk about 'company X', I usually say "we" rather than "they."	.74	8.39
'Company X's' successes are my successes.	.74	8.38
When someone praises 'company X', it feels like a personal compliment.	.91	9.83
If a story in the media criticized 'company X', I would feel embarrassed.	.56	6.44
Business line support (n = 4; CR = .83; AVE = .562)		
The knowledge of the Business Lines helps us in selling products.	.52	
The Business Lines act in a responsive manner when we raise issues about products.	.79	6.20
The quality of service delivered by the Business Lines to salespeople is good.	.80	6.25
The Business Lines provides good feedback on how to sell products.	.84	6.34

Following prior research (Atuahene-Gima 2005; He and Wong 2004), we chose a multiplicative measure of managers' orientation toward the sale of new and

existing products to operationalize the dual orientation. Compared with other similar operationalizations (i.e., a difference construct that measures the absolute difference between exploration and exploitation or an additive construct that sums exploration and exploitation), this method offers a better measure of the synergetic effect (Atuahene-Gima 2005).

Table 2 1: (Continued) Scale Items for Construct Measures

<i>Measures Model 2</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>	<i>t-Value</i>
Sales manager orientation toward the sale of existing products (n = 5; CR = .87; AVE = .57)		
My sales manager wants us to devote our time and attention primarily to...		
the selling of existing products in our portfolio.	.67	
the selling of upgrades of existing products and services.	.62	6.79
the exploitation of the sales argument for existing products in our assortment.	.77	8.20
the complete utilization of selling opportunities for existing products.	.88	9.02
maximize the sales of existing modules.	.81	8.55
Proactive selling of existing products (n = 5; CR = .89; AVE = .62)		
Within team Y, I am the one who...		
takes the initiative in selling <i>existing products</i> .	.78	
does not give up easily when encountering a customer to whom it is difficult to sell <i>existing products</i> .	.74	9.53
anticipates potential problems with selling <i>existing products</i> .	.71	9.06
is constantly on the lookout to identify opportunities to sell <i>existing products</i> .	.87	11.44
actively scans the need for <i>existing products</i> .	.82	10.69
Incentive-based rewards (n = 3; CR = .86; AVE = .68)		
The pay scheme strongly motivates me to achieve team performance goals.	.89	
I am keenly aware how to maximize the team-based part in my payment.	.75	10.47
I am strongly motivated by the team-based pay scheme to be innovative and entrepreneurial.	.82	11.51
Long-term rewards (n = 3; CR = .86; AVE = .68)		
I am strongly motivated by the pay system to take a long-term orientation (e.g., revenue growth).	.81	
Our pay policies make it possible to achieve long-term (1 or more years) goals.	.92	11.86
Our pay policies make me keenly aware that long-term results (e.g., revenue growth) are more important than short-term results (e.g., O.I.T.).	.73	9.71

Notes: n = scale items; CR = construct reliability; AVE = average variance extracted

Proactive selling. The proactive selling scale was adapted from the proactive behavior scales of De Jong and De Ruyter (2004) and Bateman and Crant (1993). Respondents were asked to consider new products to be those introduced during the past 12 months and existing products to be those that had been part of the company's product portfolio for more than 12 months. Again, we used in-depth interviews with sales managers, salespeople, and support staff to adjust the items and make them context specific.

Organizational identification. The operationalization of OI was based on Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item scale.

Controls. We decide to include the following formal control variables: the salesperson's age, team tenure, team rewards, long term rewards, and business line support as control variables. Consistent with previous research we included age and tenure as potential influencers of individuals' new product selling performance (Ahearne et al. 2010b; Fu 2009). Team and long-term rewards are formal control mechanisms, influencing sales performance. We thus also controlled for this, adapting both scales from Wei and Atuahene-Gima (2009). Finally, we control for business line support, which refers to sales persons' perceptions of the internal service and communication between business lines and the sales force, adapting the inter-team support scale from De Jong et al. (2004).

Product sales performance. Objective measures of "sales performance for new products," and "sales performance for existing products" were obtained from the company's database. Following Joshi et al. (2006) and Wieseke et al. (2009), each measure expresses sales performance as a percentage of the individual salesperson's sales target. Scores above 100 indicated that the salesperson had exceeded his/her sales target, and scores below 100 indicated that he/she had failed to achieve his/her target. Sales revenue targets were set at the corporate level. To permit meaningful performance comparisons across all sales employees (company-wide), the investigated company used historical benchmarking to ensure that salespeople were assigned revenue goals of equal difficulty. The sales performance measure assessed an individual's sales performance against benchmarks that were calculated to take into account the products individuals were selling (e.g., the type of ICT-solutions, product size), characteristics of the sales territory (e.g., geographic scope and density), characteristics of clients (e.g., organizations in the private versus the public sector, share of customer, strategic importance), and characteristics of the market (e.g., level of competition, market dynamism) (cf. Joshi et al. 2006).

2.3.3 Measurement Validation

The data were analyzed in two consecutive stages. First, we explored the factor structure of the scales of the compositional constructs used in this study, entering

their items simultaneously in a principle components analysis. Eight factors emerged and all items loaded on the a priori defined scales (cross loadings < .40). Secondly, we performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the validity of the measures. Because the inclusion of more than five constructs would result in stringent demand regarding sample size (Hair et al. 2005), Bentler and Chou (1987) recommend that sub-models should be analyzed. This approach is well established in the marketing literature (Atuahene-Gima and Li 2002). We ran two separate measurement models, grouping related constructs. The first CFA grouped items measuring: sales manager's orientating towards the sale of new products, proactive selling of new products, OI, and business line support ($\chi^2 = 268.03$; d.f. = 164; normed fit index (NFI) = .90; nonnormed fit index (NNFI) = .95; comparative fit index (CFI) = .96; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .063; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .064). The second CFA analyzed sales manager's orientating towards the sale of existing products, proactive selling of existing products, incentive-based rewards, and long-term rewards ($\chi^2 = 159.27$; d.f. = 98; normed fit index (NFI) = .92; nonnormed fit index (NNFI) = .96; comparative fit index (CFI) = .96; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .060; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .064). As indicated, the models suggest a sufficient fit to the data. Table 2-1 shows the results, including construct reliabilities and item-level factor loadings with t-values. All scales also have sufficient reliability, with composite reliabilities varying between .76 and .89 (see Table 2-1) (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994). The variance extracted was greater than .50 for each construct (except for sales manager's orientation towards the sale of new products, which is .48), in support of convergent validity. Furthermore, the data in Tables 2-1 and 2-2 indicate the discriminant validity of the constructs, because the variance extracted exceeds the average variance shared with any other study construct.

2.3.4 Analysis

To test our hypotheses, we estimated two three-level multivariate regression models, using MLwiN software (Rasbash et al. 2000). Level 1 referred to the dependent

variables indexed by $h = 1, \dots, m$; level 2 featured the specific salesperson $i = 1, \dots, n_i$; and level 3 involved the sales units $j = 1, \dots, n$. With this approach, we attained a correct estimation of our model by acknowledging the multilevel nature of the data (De Jong et al. 2005; Marinova et al. 2008). Therefore, we estimated H_1 – H_4 with the following multivariate regression model:

$$\begin{aligned}
 Y_{hij} = & \beta_{0h} + \beta_{1h}AGE_{ij} + \beta_{2h}TEAMTEN_{ij} + \beta_{3h}LTR_{ij} + \beta_{4h}IBR_{ij} + \beta_{5h}BLS_{ij} + \\
 & \beta_{6h}MORNEW_{ij} + \beta_{7h}MOREXT_{ij} + \beta_{8h}OI_{ij} + \beta_{9h}(MORNEW_{ij} \times MOREXT_{ij})_{ij} + \\
 & \beta_{10h}(MORNEW_{ij} \times OI_{ij})_{ij} + \beta_{11h}(MOREXT_{ij} \times OI_{ij})_{ij} + \beta_{12h}(MORNEW_{ij} \times \\
 & MOREXT_{ij} \times OI_{ij})_{ij} + u_{0hj} + e_{hij} .
 \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

where

Y_{ij} is the measure of the h^{th} dependent variable for salesperson i of unit j ;

AGE = age of salesperson,

TEAMTEN = tenure with sales team,

LTR = long-term rewards,

IBR = incentive-based rewards,

BLS = business line support,

MORNEW = sales manager's orientation toward the sale of new products,

MOREXT = sales manager's orientation toward the sale of existing products,

OI = organizational identification,

β_{0j} = random coefficients that capture individual-specific unobserved heterogeneity within units,

u_{0j} are $\sim N(0, \sigma^2)$ and denote unit-specific variances, and

β_{nj} = mean value for each unit effect, thereby accounting for unit specific variances (u_{0j}).

The model allows for within- and between-unit effects (i.e., a random-intercept regression model), thereby controlling for the multilevel structure of the data

(salespeople nested within sales units) (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002).

The model estimation consisted of four steps: Specify the covariance terms among the dependent variables, include the control variables, add the antecedents, and specify the two- and three-way interaction terms in the model. We also mean-centered the variables to mitigate multicollinearity between the interaction terms and constituent parts (Aiken and West 1991). The maximum variance inflation factors were all less than 1.9, indicating an absence of serious multicollinearity (Neter et al. 1996).

To test H_5 and H_6 , we instead used the following regression model:

$$Z_{hij} = \beta_{0h} + \beta_{1h}AGE_{ij} + \beta_{2h}TEAMTEN_{ij} + \beta_{3h}LTR_{ij} + \beta_{4h}IBR_{ij} + \beta_{5h}BLS_{ij} + \beta_{6h}PRONEW_{ij} + \beta_{7h}PROEXT_{ij} + \beta_{8h}(PRONEW_{ij} \times PROEXT_{ij})_{ij} + u_{0hj} + e_{hij}. \quad (2)$$

where Z_{ij} is the measure of the h th dependent variable (i.e., new or existing product sales performance) for salesperson i of unit j . In addition, PRONEW = proactive sale of new products, and PROEXT = proactive sale of existing products.

Table 2-2: Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations among Constructs

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Age												
2 Team tenure	.229**											
3 Long term rewards	.074	.072										
4 Incentive-based rewards	.113	-.038	.555**									
5 Business line support	.227**	.016	.143	.173*								
6 Manag. orient. sale of new products	.067	.122	.264**	.169*	.083							
7 Manag. orient. sale of existing products	.002	.028	.225**	.153	.015	.393**						
8 Organizational identification	.065	.197*	.095	.050	.035	.097	.042					
9 Proactive selling of existing products	-.124	.161*	.033	-.002	-.015	.006	.260**	.228**				
10 Proactive selling of new products	-.040	.141	-.004	.038	.119	.215**	.038	.307**	.555**			
11 Sales performance for new products	-.034	.121	.139	.027	-.037	.051	.071	.004	.057	.240**		
12 Sales performance for existing products	-.068	.051	-.049	.030	-.076	-.251**	-.044	.061	.246**	-.014	-.129	
Mean	43.722	3.474	2.799	3.400	3.289	3.742	4.039	3.683	4.183	4.171	21.692	71.874
Standard deviation	7.350	3.008	1.071	1.048	.820	.741	.702	.787	.703	.783	28.090	47.607

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (one-tailed).

Notes: Manag. orient. sale of new products = sales manager's orientation toward the sale of new products; Manag. orient. sale of existing products = sales manager's orientation toward the sale of existing products.

Table 2-3: Results of Sales Manager Orientation–Proactive Selling Relationships

Dependent Variables	Proactive Selling of New Products (h = 1)			Proactive Selling of Existing Products (h = 2)		
	Model 1a β (SE) ^a	Model 2a β (SE) ^a	Model 3a β (SE) ^a	Model 1b β (SE) ^a	Model 2b β (SE) ^a	Model 3b β (SE) ^a
Intercept	-.002 (.077)	-.002 (.069)	-.037 (.069)	.000 (.055)	.000 (.053)	-.032 (.053)
<i>Increase Model Fit (Step 0)</i>			χ^2 (2) = 62.251***			
Control Variables						
Age	-.014 (.009)	-.013 (.009)	-.017* (.008)	-.017* (.008)	-.016* (.008)	-.021** (.008)
Team tenure	.048* (.021)	.042 (.021)	.032 (.020)	.047** (.019)	.048** (.018)	.044** (.018)
Long-term rewards	-.077 (.074)	-.105 (.074)	-.105 (.070)	.017 (.067)	-.006 (.065)	-.007 (.062)
Incentive based rewards	.090 (.075)	.079 (.074)	.099 (.070)	.006 (.067)	.000 (.064)	.011 (.062)
Business line support	.123* (.064)	.111* (.063)	.124* (.059)	.012 (.057)	.019 (.055)	.029 (.052)
<i>Increase Model Fit (Step 1)</i>			χ^2 (10) = 16.726			
Main Predictors						
Man. orient. sale of new products		.204* (.091)	.154* (.087)		-.122 (.080)	-.157* (.077)
Man. orient. sale of existing products		-.001 (.089)	.001 (.094)	<i>H1a</i>	.307*** (.083)	.358*** (.081)
<i>Increase Model Fit (Step 2)</i>			χ^2 (4) = 29.327***			
Moderating Effects						
Organizational identification			.287*** (.076)			.189** (.068)
Interactions: 2-way						
Man. orient. sale of new products × Man. orient. sale of existing products			.260** (.108)	<i>H2a</i>		.216* (.096)
Man. orient. sale of new products × Organizational identification			.064 (.102)			.129 (.092)
Man. orient. sale of existing products × Organizational identification			-.220* (.121)	<i>H3a</i>		-.233* (.109)
Interactions: 3-way						
Man. orient. sale of new products × Man. orient. sale of existing products × Organizational. identification			-.284* (.136)	<i>H4a</i>		-.242* (.122)
<i>Increase Model Fit (Step 3)</i>			χ^2 (10) = 26.974**			
<i>Explained Variance (%)</i>		25.5			22.4	

^a Unstandardized coefficients (standard errors in parentheses)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Notes: $N = 154$; significance is based on one-tailed tests. Man. orient. sale of new products = sales manager's orientation toward the sale of new products; Man. orient. sale of existing products = sales manager's orientation toward the sale of existing products.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Influence of Sales Manager's Orientation on Proactive Selling

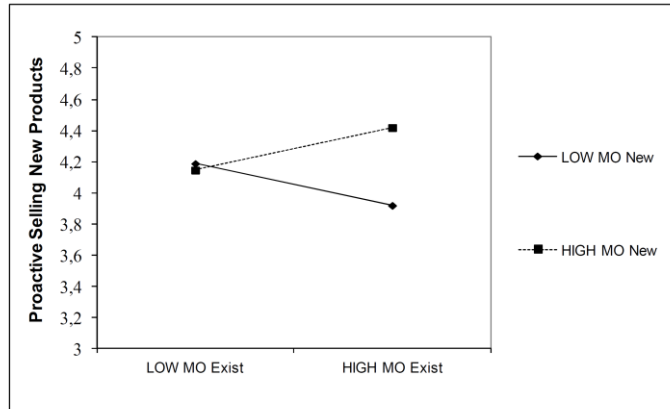
In Table 2-3 we report the results of the hypothesized effects of the antecedents of perceived manager orientation on proactive selling by a salesperson. As would be expected, sales manager's orientation toward the sale of new products has a positive effect on proactive selling of new products, as expected (Model 3a: $\beta = .154, p < .05$). We also find that the manager's orientation toward the sale of existing products has a positive effect on the proactive selling of those existing products (Model 3b: $\beta = .358, p < .001$). Although the sales manager's orientation toward new product sales negatively affects proactive selling of existing products (Model 3b: $\beta = -.157, p < .05$), the orientation toward existing product sales is not related to the proactive selling of new products (Model 3a: $\beta = .001, p = n.s.$). Therefore, we find support for H_{1b} but not for H_{1a} .

Our results indicate a positive interaction effect of a sales manager's joint orientation on the proactive selling of new products (Model 3a: $\beta = .260, p < .01$), in support of H_{2a} , and proactive selling of existing products (Model 3b: $\beta = .216, p < .05$), in support of H_{2b} . In Figure 2-2, Panels A and B, we display these interaction effects graphically to facilitate their interpretation. If sales managers with an initially singular orientation toward new products adopt a joint orientation toward new and existing products, the initially negative cross-over effect of their orientation toward new products on the proactive selling of existing products disappears and becomes neutral (see Figure 2-2, Panel B). Yet, if sales managers that initially have a singular orientation toward the sale of existing products take a joint orientation toward existing and new products, the initially negative cross-over effect of their orientation toward existing products on the proactive selling of new products turns into a clearly positive direction (Figure 2-2, Panel A).

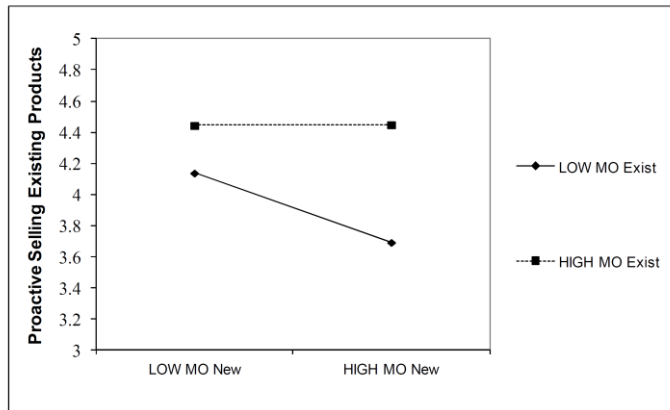
Regarding the results for the moderating effects of OI (Table 2-3), we find a negative rather than a positive moderating effect of OI on the relationship between manager orientation towards existing products and salesperson's proactive selling of new products (Model 3a: $\beta = -.220, p < .05$). In addition, salesperson's OI does not significantly moderate effect of manager orientation toward new products on

proactive selling of existing products (Model 3b: $\beta = .129, p > n.s.$). Hence, we also do not find support for H_{3a} and H_{3b} . We will explain these effects later.

A. New Products



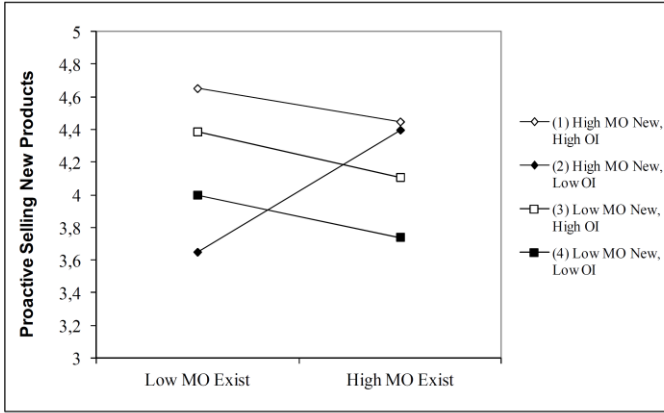
B. Existing Products



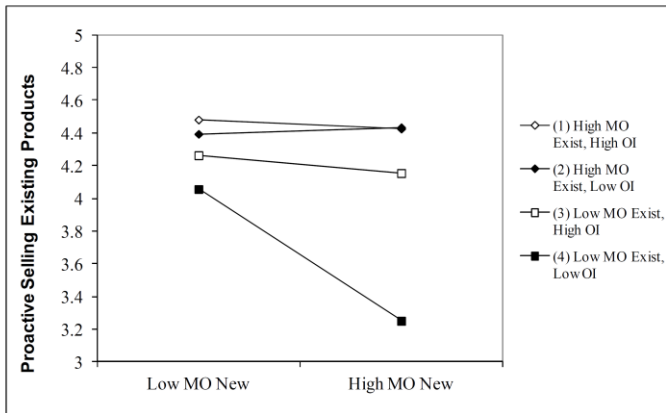
Notes: MO New = sales manager's orientation toward the sale of new products; MO Exist = sales manager's orientation toward the sale of existing products.

Figure 2-2: Two-Way Interaction Effect of Sales Manager Orientation toward the Sale of New and Existing Products on Proactive Selling

A. New Products



B. Existing Products



Notes: MO New = sales manager’s orientation toward the sale of new products; MO Exist = sales manager’s orientation toward the sale of existing products; OI = salesperson organizational identification.

Figure 2-3: Three-Way Interaction Between Sales Manager Orientations and Organizational Identification on Proactive Selling

In addition, we find two negative three-way interaction effects, related to moderation by OI of the interaction effects among the manager’s joint orientation to sell new and existing products and proactive selling of these products (Model 3a: $\beta = -.284, p < .05$; Model 3b: $\beta = -.242, p < .05$), in support of H_{4a} and H_{4b} . In Figure 2-3, we plot these three-way interaction effects. Panel A suggests that managers with a simultaneously high focus on existing and new product sales are less effective in stimulating proactive selling of new products, if their salespeople have a strong OI.

A comparison of Panels A and B further reveals a similar effect for the proactive selling of existing products; managers with a joint orientation are less effective in encouraging proactive selling of existing products when salespeople are strong identifiers. These graphs thus confirm our prior regression coefficient-based interpretations.

For the control variables, we find a significant negative effect of age on proactive selling behavior for new and existing products. That is, older salespeople are less proactive. Yet our results reveal a positive effect of team tenure on proactive selling for existing products. Finally, we find a significant a positive effect of business line support on proactive selling of new products.

2.4.2 Influence of Proactive Selling on Sales Performance

With Table 2-4, we reveal a positive impact of salesperson proactive selling of new products on new products' sales performance (Model 3a: $\beta = .117, p < .001$), as well as a positive effect of proactive selling of existing products on the sales performance of these products (Model 3b: $\beta = .246, p < .001$), which supports both H_{4a} and H_{4b} . In addition, we find a significant negative effect of proactive selling of existing products on new product sales performance (Model 2b: $\beta = -.068, p < .05$) and a similar negative effect of proactive selling of new products on the sales performance of existing products (Model 2a: $\beta = -.135, p < .01$), in support of H_{5a} and H_{5b} , respectively.

In addition, we do not find any negative effects between a salesperson's proactive selling of new and of existing products on the sales performance criteria for these products (Model 3a; $\beta = -.013, p = ns$; Model 3b; $\beta = .003, p = ns$). Thus, there is no evidence that combining the proactive selling of new and existing products is harmful to sales performance outcomes. Finally, of the included controls, we only found long-term rewards to have a significant, positive effect on new product sales performance.

Table 2-4: Results of Proactive Selling–Sales Performance Relationships

Dependent Variables	Sales Performance for New Products (h = 1)			Sales Performance for Existing Products (h = 2)		
	Model 1a	Model 2a	Model 3a	Model 1b	Model 2b	Model 3b
	β (SE) ^a	β (SE) ^a	β (SE) ^a	β (SE) ^a	β (SE) ^a	β (SE) ^a
Intercept	.217*** (.023)	.216*** (.023)	.220*** (.023)	.720*** (.039)	.719*** (.036)	.718*** (.038)
<i>Increase Model Fit (Step 0)</i>			$\chi^2 (2) = 2.654$			
Control Variables						
Age	-.002 (.003)	-.002 (.003)	-.002 (.003)	-.005 (.005)	-.002 (.005)	-.002 (.005)
Team tenure	.012 (.008)	.009 (.007)	.010 (.008)	-.013 (.013)	-.007 (.013)	-.007 (.013)
Long-term rewards	.046* (.027)	.052* (.026)	.054* (.026)	-.046 (.046)	-.059 (.044)	-.059 (.044)
Incentive-based rewards	-.012 (.027)	-.015 (.026)	-.017 (.026)	.050 (.046)	.057 (.044)	.058 (.044)
Business line support	-.012 (.023)	-.024 (.023)	-.023 (.023)	-.031 (.040)	-.019 (.038)	-.019 (.038)
<i>Increase Model Fit (Step 1)</i>			$\chi^2 (10) = 9.951$			
Main Predictors						
Proactive selling of new products		.121*** (.034)	.117*** (.034)	<i>H4a</i>	-.136** (.057)	-.135** (.057)
Proactive selling of existing products		-.062 (.038)	-.068* (.039)	<i>H5a</i>	.245*** (.063)	.246*** (.066)
<i>Increase Model Fit (Step 2)</i>			$\chi^2 (8) = 25.212***$			
Moderating Effects						
Interactions: 2-way						
Proactive selling of new products × Proactive selling of existing products			-.013 (.024)			.003 (.040)
<i>Increase Model Fit (Step 3)</i>			$\chi^2 (2) = .306$			
<i>Explained Variance (%)</i>		13.0		9.5		

^aUnstandardized coefficients (standard errors in parentheses)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Notes: $N = 154$; significance is based on one-tailed tests.

2.5 Discussion

Sales managers' orientation toward new products has differential effects on salespeople's proactive selling of new and existing products, compared with an orientation toward existing products. Specifically, the former orientation increases the proactive selling of new products, but it decreases existing product selling. In contrast, a manager orientation toward the selling existing products positively affects the proactive selling of existing products, but it has no impact on the proactive selling of new products. Thus, as expected, a sales manager's orientation on either new or existing products motivates salespeople to proactively sell either new or existing products, respectively.

Yet, the anticipated negative cross-over effect of manager orientation on the proactive selling of alternative products only occurs for managers with an orientation toward the sale of new products. Apparently, if a manager is "biased" toward new products, insufficient employee resources remain to sell existing products. Because it moves beyond the scope of regular, day-to-day business, new product selling probably requires greater mindfulness to the steps in the selling process (cf. Shiffrin and Schneider 1977) and more cognitive energy. The result is a decrease in proactive existing product selling. In contrast, a manager's orientation toward existing products does not negatively affect the proactive sales of new products, perhaps because existing product selling is a routine activity that is cognitively less demanding; sales employees still have enough cognitive capacity available to perform the new product selling task to satisfaction despite a sales manager emphasizing existing product sales targets. An additional explanation may be that actors can perform routine, but not non-routine activities more efficiently over time.

In line with our expectations, we find positive interaction effects of sales managers' orientation toward the sale of new and existing products on the proactive selling of both new and existing products. Thus, sales manager's dual goal orientation offers benefits. Dual oriented sales managers can better motivate salespeople to sell new and existing products proactively and in parallel than can their counterparts with a one-sided orientation. Interestingly, this result positively nuances existing literature on productivity/quality (e.g., De Jong and De Ruyter 2004; Marinova et al. 2008) and learning/performance orientations (Harris et al. 2005; Sujana et al. 1994), which primarily suggests that manager orientations cannot be combined easily and often have contrasting effects on performance outcomes.

Our findings further reveal that OI generally promotes employee proactiveness in a sales context. Specifically, a salesperson's OI has significant and positive direct effects on his or her proactive selling for existing and new products, suggesting that salespeople who internalized a company's short- and long-term objectives are more

inclined to contribute to the organization's overall cause. Moreover, OI moderates the sales manager–salesperson relationship. Specifically, we find that the direction of the crossover effect of manager existing product orientation on the proactive selling of new products depends on a salesperson's level of OI. For high identifiers this cross-over effect is negative, while for low identifiers this effect turns out to be positive. A possible explanation is that salespersons with a high level of OI exert a lot of proactive effort in selling new products. Confronted with a manager with a modal orientation towards existing products may reduce their proactive selling behaviors of the neglected product type. In contrast, a manager's modal orientation toward existing products does not negatively affect the proactive sales of new products of low identifiers. Putting relatively less effort in the selling of new products than their high identifying counterparts, low identifiers may experience a smaller to negligible reduction in their effort to sell new products when their sales manager emphasizes existing over new product sales targets.

In addition and contrary to our expectations, OI does not influence the negative cross-over effect of a sales manager's modal orientation towards new product orientation on proactive selling of existing products. Hence, all employees exert less proactive effort in existing product selling when their manager has a modal orientation towards selling new products, independent whether they have a high or low level of OI. A manager with a modal orientation towards new products generally cannibalizes employee attention for selling existing products; his/her attention focus on this complex, non-routine new product selling task requires a serious level of mindfulness, leaving less cognitive resources for the employee to be allocated to alternative selling activities. It results in a decrease in proactive selling behaviors for existing product for both high and low identifiers alike. In other words, OI is unable to buffer against this depletion of cognitive resources. Possibly only experienced high identifiers may experience a smaller negative effect. This conjecture could be studied in future research.

A general observation of this study pertains to the interplay between sales manager's dual goal orientation and salesperson's OI. We tested the three-way interaction effect of a manager's joint orientations with salespeople's OI. Our results

reveal that dual-oriented managers are more effective than managers with a dominant or one-sided orientation when a salesperson's OI is low. While a modal orientation toward either new or existing products has deleterious consequences for the sale of the neglected product type, sales manager attention for simultaneously selling new and existing products prevents a sales person's bias toward either short- or long-term objectives, which safeguards a company's interests. However, a salesperson with high identification with the organization makes a dual-oriented manager's orientation considerably less effective, though still as effective as a one-sided orientation.

Finally, our results demonstrate that a salesperson's proactive selling relates significantly to objective sales performance criteria for new and existing products. Our sales performance data come from a separate data source and refer to a later point in time. The negative crossover effects of proactive selling of (1) new products on existing product sales performance and (2) existing products on new product sales performance suggest that these two activities are in competition. Specifically, time spent on one activity cannot be spent on the alternative task. Nevertheless, the absence of any negative interactions between proactive selling of new products and proactive selling existing products implies that salespeople who combine these two types of selling do not suffer from reduced new or existing product sales performance. Apparently, dual oriented salespeople can overcome potential cognitive burdens and switching costs from selling new alongside existing products. Hence, a dual-orientation does not seriously impair product-specific selling efforts and dual oriented salespersons are capable of carrying out a companies' ambidextrous product selling strategy.

2.5.1 Theoretical Implications

Our study has several theoretical implications. First, our model contributes to the literature by offering a better understanding of the contradictions and tensions involved in sales managers' decision making and salespeople's proactive selling of new and existing products. It extends research that treats leadership as an antecedent

of subordinates' proactive behavior (Detert and Burris 2007; Griffin et al. 2007; Parker et al. 2006), overlooking the possibility that modal orientations may have deleterious effects for the neglected task. Second, we develop a construct to measure a sales manager's orientation toward the sale of new and existing products and operationalize dual focus in manager orientation using an interaction term—i.e., manager ambidexterity adding to the work regarding firm and business unity level ambidexterity (Mom et al. 2009). Third, we add to the debate on the role of OI on proactive behaviors (Tangirala and Ramanujam 2008), demonstrating that OI is an important contingency factor in the relationship between sales managers and salespeople. Specifically, OI complements the incremental effect of a sales manager's joint selling orientation on salespeople's proactive selling. Fourth, we extend prior research by empirically showing causal linkages between subjective measures of proactive selling and objective criteria of sales performance that are product-specific in nature.

2.5.2 Managerial Implications

These results have important implications for managers who must make decisions related to new and existing product sales. First, top management should attend to the quality of their sales managers' orientations toward new and existing product selling. Managerial orientations based on product newness determine salespeople's proactive selling of new and existing products, such that employees respond effectively to the guidance they receive and allocate attention and effort in accordance with their designated tasks. Because managers with a dual orientation mobilize their sales force best, firms may want to assess the extent to which their managers use these orientations, and then provide the accordant training facilities to stimulate a dual orientation amongst managers. Shorter product life cycles and trends toward more complex and dynamic selling contexts increase the need to sell newly developed products alongside existing ones (Teck-Hua et al. 2002). This wider range of selling practices in turn requires a manager who is capable of motivating employees to sell both.

Second, because salesperson OI appears to be an important contingency factor in

the sales manager–salesperson relationship, managers must pay careful attention to the level and dynamics of OI. Companies should undertake specific salesperson training to build OI, which reduces the sales manager's burden and buffers the salesperson against the effects of a manager with a singular orientation. Investing in increasing OI requires a dynamic rather than a static view. For example, employees may identify more with an organization over time, yet reward concerns and organizational turnarounds may prompt temporary or permanent reductions in OI. Monitoring of OI and related training thus should be a continuous instrument, relevant not only for new hires but also for sales employees who have been with the company for years.

Third, the effects of proactive selling on sales performance criteria suggest that to increase sales, managers might stimulate employee proactiveness toward selling new and existing products. The absence of a negative interaction effects between the proactive selling of new and existing products on sales performance suggests that employees can handle both types of product selling activities in parallel and effectively.

Chapter 3: *Do Retailers Really Profit from Ambidextrous Managers? Impact of Frontline Mechanisms on New and Existing Product Selling Performance*²

When manufacturers introduce a new product to the market, downstream retail partners are faced with inherent trade-offs. Retail sales personnel has to support the new product's introduction with substantial sales efforts, but also sell the existing products in stock, before storage and devaluation costs spin out of control. This study shows how retail sales managers can guide sales personnel's performance of new and existing product selling, respectively. The authors argue that a manager may have a selling orientation that prioritizes selling new products, existing products, or both (i.e., an ambidextrous selling orientation). Furthermore, they argue that managers align these selling orientations with a frontline management mechanism consisting of task autonomy, performance feedback, and employee age. Based on data gathered from sales representatives and company databases of a large European consumer electronics retailer, the authors perform a time-lagged partial least squares analysis to empirically test their conceptual model. The authors find that ambidextrous sales managers outperform their singular-minded counterparts if they properly utilize the frontline mechanisms. More specifically, ambidextrous managers tend to promote high levels of net profit obtainment by their personnel if they grant their sales employees task autonomy and give little performance feedback. In addition, a remarkable finding is that more aged sales agents tend to outperform their younger counterparts when working under an ambidextrous manager.

² This research was conducted in collaboration with Jeroen Schepers. An adapted version of this paper is currently under revision for a special issue on Sales & Innovation of the Journal of Product Innovation Management.

3.1. Introduction

Many modern-day retailers feel an increasing pressure to adopt and sell new and innovative products to their customers. Moreover, downstream players such as manufacturers often provide new product selling incentives to retailers to increase its probability of market success (e.g., Desiraju 2001; Rao and Mahi 2003). These incentives may be direct (e.g., a premium on new products sold, slotting allowances) or indirect (e.g., inform customers through a marketing campaign) and make selling new products an attractive proposition for retailers. However, retailers also need to sell their stock of existing products rapidly, as these items take up storage space and quickly devalue upon new product introductions (Tsay 2001). For instance, in the digital camera market, some models have witnessed a price slip of nearly 60% from introduction to model discontinuation, which took just over one year (4/3Rumors 2011). This leaves sales managers in retail stores with a challenge to combine the competing objectives of new and existing product selling such that they can profit from both activities.

Despite the growing interest in the area of new product selling, few studies provide insights on how managers can motivate their sales force to engage in ambidextrous selling behavior, i.e., to balance the sales performance of new and existing products. While ample research has been conducted to identify the drivers of overall sales performance (Verbeke et al. 2011), and predictors of selling intentions of new-to-market products versus line extensions have been compared (Fu et al. 2010), it remains virtually unexplored how salespeople can be guided to sell new *and* existing products. Nevertheless, as retail sales managers need to make decisions on where to allocate their resources, it is imperative they have insight into the underlying mechanisms that influence employees' selling choices. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to delineate management mechanisms to direct a salesperson's selling performance in such a way that an individual's contribution to firm net profit can be optimized. In doing so, we make the following contributions to literature.

First, while previous sales research has explored how formal control systems may influence salespeople's behavior (e.g., Baldauf et al. 2005; Evans et al. 2007), empirical results suggest that particularly a manager's selling orientation, or prioritization of strategic selling goals, is a key determinant of sales personnel performance (Arnold et al. 2009; Marinova et al. 2008; Wieseke et al. 2008). We posit that managers can be oriented toward selling new products, existing products, or both (i.e., an ambidextrous selling orientation) and investigate the relationship between a manager's selling orientation and an individual's sales performance. Extending insights of organizational learning literature to the individual manager level (Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004; Raisch and Birkinshaw 2008), we are specifically interested whether an ambidextrous selling orientation facilitates or hinders the sales performance of new and existing products respectively, and how it impacts net profit.

Second, research in the ambidexterity domain mainly advances positive effects of a dual strategic orientation (e.g., Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004; He and Wong 2004) while research in the marketing domain mainly indicates negative effects of a dual strategic orientation (e.g., Marinova et al. 2008). However, both indicate the importance of autonomy. Task autonomy enables individuals to deal with potentially conflicting tasks such as the sale of new and existing products. Therefore, extending insights from both research streams to the sales environment, we propose a mediating role of employee task autonomy between a manager's selling orientation and an individual's sales performance. In other words, autonomy may be a consequence of a manager's strategic orientation, but also impact an employee's new and existing product selling performance.

Finally, we posit that not every employee is equally proficient in dealing with the high levels of task autonomy when balancing potentially conflicting tasks. As such, we investigate the moderating role of manager performance feedback on the task autonomy-performance relationship. Atuahene-Gima (1997) posits that supervisory feedback may offer emotional and knowledge support that motivate employees to

experiment with new product selling. In addition, we examine whether task autonomy’s impact on sales performance is dependent on a salesperson’s age, as it is an important proxy indicator of salespersons’ skills (Fu 2009). Figure 3-1 provides an overview of our conceptual framework.

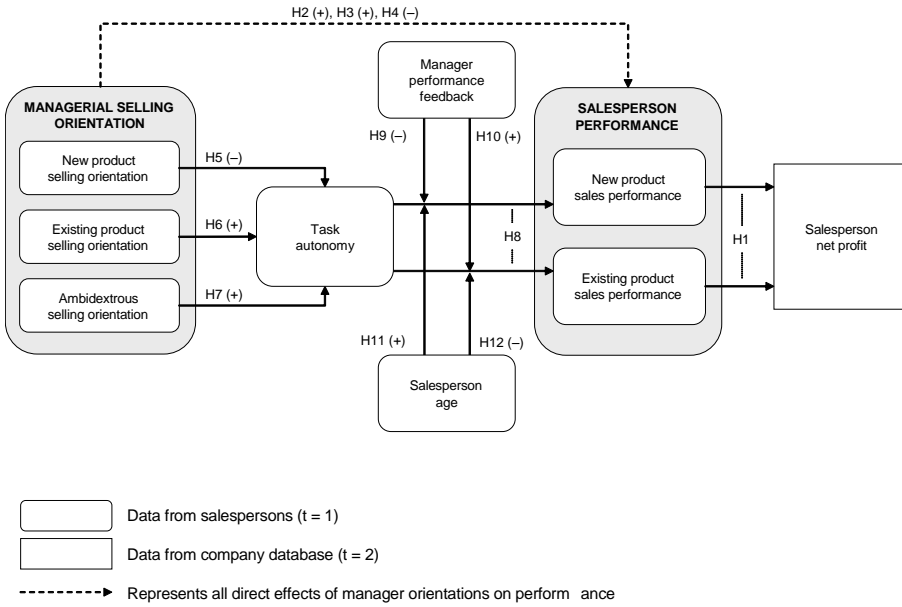


Figure 3-1: Conceptual Framework

3.2. Literature Review: New and Existing Product Performance, Ambidexterity, and the Sales Force

A growing body of research explores the role of the sales force during the introduction of new products to the market. Studies indicate that a new product’s market success largely depends on sales force commitment. For instance, Fu et al. (2010) show that salespersons’ intentions to sell new products positively relate to the growth rate of their new product sales. Similarly, Ahearne et al. (2010b) show that the amount of effort expended on selling a new product is beneficial to customer product perceptions and new product sales. Further research considers factors that may foster or hinder an individual salesperson’s new product selling activities, such as control systems, supervisee trust, and subjective norms (Ahearne et al. 2010b;

Atuahene-Gima and Li 2002; Fu et al. 2010). However, while the studies provide valuable insights, the empirical evidence mainly is collected in business-to-business settings (e.g., Ahearne et al. 2010b; Fu et al. 2010). Consequently, little attention has been paid to the idiosyncratic challenges of retailers. One particular challenge for retail sales managers is to align goals of upstream players (i.e., manufacturers) with goals of the retail company (Hughes and Ahearne 2010). Misalignment may particularly occur during new product introductions as upstream parties force downstream partners to adopt and sell new products, while the downstream partner wants to simultaneously reduce mature product overstock (Tsay 2001).

Given that many salespersons have to combine the sale of new and existing products, it is reasonable to assume that both activities influence each other and, ultimately, sales profits. Prior studies have assumed that salespeople prefer the sale of proven sellers over new and innovative products (e.g., Atuahene-Gima 1997; Wieseke et al. 2008) and compared selling intentions of new-to-the-market products with intentions to sell line extensions (Fu et al. 2010). However, while scholars indicate that new and existing product selling differ in terms of selling approach, risk, and profit obtainment (Atuahene-Gima 1997) previous studies have not contrasted selling processes for new products with selling processes for existing products.

Scholars in the organizational learning and marketing field have long tried to understand how managers can support frontline employees to effectively and efficiently combine multiple, potentially conflicting tasks, such as the sale of new and existing products (e.g., Marinova et al. 2008). To better understand how managers can promote the sale of new and existing products, we translate insights from the literature on ambidexterity to a sales context and propose that a sales manager may have an ambidextrous selling orientation, i.e., focusing on both new and existing products. Manager ambidexterity refers to a “behavioral orientation towards combining exploration and exploitation related activities within a certain period of time” (Mom et al. 2009, p. 812). A manager that sets exploration goals is

focused on the long-term payoffs of its activities, likes to take risk, and accepts uncertainty to achieve higher-order goals—these characteristics correspond well to the practices of selling new products. Exploiting managers, on the other hand, stress the achievement of short-term goals, cherish the status quo situation, and look for certain benefits—this reflects trying to sell existing products. An ambidextrous orientation typically reflects top management directives and/or managers' belief that it is important to bridge potentially contradicting activities and orientations (cf. Marinova et al. 2008). The use of an ambidexterity perspective has helped scholars explain manager behavior in potentially conflicting situations (Jansen et al. 2009; Mom et al. 2009), overall unit performance (Atuahene-Gima 2005), and new product success (Kim and Atuahene-Gima). Furthermore, recent empirical evidence demonstrates the importance ambidextrous behavior in the frontline (Jasmand et al. 2012). In the following section, we develop our conceptual model.

3.3. Hypotheses Development

3.3.1. Salesperson performance and profit

In order to make decisions on guiding employees to sell primarily new products, existing products, or both, sales managers need to know how an employee's performance in each product category contributes to the store's net profit. Previous work has defined "performance" as sales volume, or the number of products sold per day, week, or month (Fu et al. 2008; Fu et al. 2010). While intuition suggests that a better performance leads to a higher firm profit, we argue that individual performance on new and existing products relates to net profit differentially.

In retail settings, more mature products often are sold at discount prices, leaving a lower profit margin for the retailer (Tellis and Zufryden 1995). In contrast, new products frequently are sold at a premium price (Kang et al.), because retailers recognize that customers have relatively low internal price reference knowledge for newly developed products (Zeithaml 1988). In addition, customer's willingness to pay for new products often is higher because new product introductions commonly

are backed up with manufacturer's marketing efforts such as advertisements with the intention to increase demand. For instance, Apple spent \$691 million on advertising in the year that it launched the iPad and the new iPhone 4, promoting speculation, conversation and word of mouth buzz (Dilger 2010). In addition, upstream partners such as manufacturers may reduce the wholesale price of new products to further stimulate retailers to carry the product in their assortment. This increases the profit margin and is likely to benefit the net profit of retailers (Lariviere and Padmanabhan 1997). Therefore, we posit:

H1: A salesperson's performance for new products relates more positively to his or her obtained sales profit than the performance for existing products.

3.3.2. Managerial Selling Orientation and Salesperson Performance

A sales manager's selling orientation reflects his or her prioritization of strategic selling goals as interpreted by followers. As our main interest lies in balancing the salespeople's performance in selling existing and new products, we posit that a manager may be oriented towards selling either of the two product types. Rather than an objective reality, these selling orientations involve significant evaluative elements and constitute a psychological or perceptual state because of differences in individuals' interpretations (Di Mascio ; Wieseke et al. 2009). In other words, salespeople interpret a manager's selling orientation and derive perceptions of strong managerial expectations (i.e., norms) pertaining to selling existing or new products. For instance, employees may experience that a manager wants them to develop sales arguments for new products and services. Employees are likely to comply with these perceived norms, as promotion and career advancement opportunities are contingent on manager evaluations (Fu et al. 2010; Wieseke et al. 2008).

Sales environments are oftentimes characterized by a vertical informational cascade, which refers to a sequence of identical choices between leaders and followers through the observation and imitation of previous decisions (Homburg et al. 2010). Being confronted with these decisions, salespeople are inclined to ignore

their 'private information' and rely exclusively on the information obtained by their interpretation of the managerial orientation (Banerjee 1992; Bikhchandani et al. 1992). Wieseke et al. (2008) demonstrated that when managers adopt a new brand, their followers are also more likely to adopt that brand. Similarly, we expect that salespeople optimize their performance of selling new products when the manager is oriented towards selling new products. In addition, they likely optimize their performance of selling existing products, when the manager's selling orientation is directed to existing products. Hence, we posit:

H2: A sales manager's new product selling orientation has a positive effect on a salesperson's performance for selling new products.

H3: A sales manager's existing product selling orientation has a positive effect on a salesperson's performance for selling existing products.

Despite the directive effects of each individual orientation, literature suggests possible contradictory effects to result from a manager's ambidextrous orientation, i.e., a manager focusing on both new and existing product selling simultaneously. Intuition suggests that stressing the importance of selling both new and existing products may raise the awareness of sales people such that selling products in each category is important and should not be taken for granted (cf. Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004). The higher awareness for both categories should lead to more effective and efficient allocation of time and effort and consequently improve performance. However, some research indicates that pursuing dual goals may decrease individuals' performance (Langfred and Moye 2004). Divergent interpretations of the orientations lead to unclear expectations that stifle the allocation of cognitive effort to each individual task (Hobfoll 2002). Even when interpreted correctly, goal-setting theory (Locke and Latham 2002) predicts that the lack of a clear goal focus may harm task performance. Thus, salespersons may have

trouble interpreting a manager's ambidextrous orientation. Confronted with mixed signals on whether and when to sell new or existing products, subordinates may not get a clear picture of a manager's selling task prioritization. We therefore hypothesize that a sales manager's ambidextrous selling orientation is harmful to a salesperson's selling performance. In summary, we hypothesize:

H4: A sales manager's ambidextrous selling orientation has a negative effect on a salesperson's performance for selling (a) new and (b) existing products.

3.3.3. The Mediating Role of Task Autonomy

Management priorities such as selling orientations are operationalized through practices, actions and directives that guide employee efforts toward desired goals (Hambrick and Mason 1984). Therefore, while many studies examine the direct effect of strategic orientations on performance, it has recently been advocated that orientations relate to individual performance through frontline management mechanisms (Marinova et al. 2008). More specifically, managers face the essential decision between external control through supervision and tight monitoring, and internal control through the promotion of self-regulation (Hartline et al. 2000).

We argue that in our research setting, a managerial orientation determines the balance between external and internal control by the amount of autonomy they grant their subordinates in their decisions which products to sell. A manager relying on external control provides salespeople with little task autonomy, while a manager relying on internal control mechanisms provides high levels of task autonomy to his/her followers. We posit that a sales manager who emphasizes selling new products will opt for the frontline management mechanism of low task autonomy because they want to prevent that the new product is neglected by subordinates. Many scholars have indicated that salespeople prefer the sale of proven sellers of existing products (e.g., Wieseke et al. 2008). Recently, research demonstrates that salespeople put less effort in new products because they believe that the new product will "sell itself" (Ahearne et al. 2010b). Ahearne et al. (2010b) indicate that this is

especially likely in situations where new products introductions are backed up by large marketing campaigns that aim to educate customers about the existence of new products and its added value. Given that many sales managers are high performing salespeople themselves, they are likely to understand that new products do not sell themselves and require attention and time. Combined with the strategic importance of new product introductions, sales managers in the retailing industry are likely to impose hierarchical supervision and limitations on autonomous action to prevent a poor performance.

When a manager emphasizes selling existing products, he or she allows for more autonomy because salespeople are trusted to do a good job on the more routine task of existing product selling. Indeed, it has been argued that salespeople are likely to take the path of least resistance in their sales activities (Fu et al. 2008) such as selling existing products. The sale of existing products is low on cognitive demands because market demand already exists, value propositions are known, and sales tactics have been tried and tested. By granting salespeople more autonomy when selling existing products sales managers can devote more time to functions that enhance his or her personal effectiveness. Hence, we posit:

H5: A sales manager's new product selling orientation has a negative relationship with the salesperson's degree of task autonomy.

H6: A sales manager's existing product selling orientation has a positive relationship with the salesperson's degree of task autonomy.

Furthermore, we anticipate that when a manager emphasizes the sale of both new and existing products, i.e., he or she is ambidextrous, sales employees are allowed more autonomy to decide how to allocate their time and effort. Marinova et al. (2008) demonstrate that frontline managers give their subordinates more autonomy when pursuing simultaneously productivity and quality goals. Similarly,

ambidextrous managers may understand that they are unable to anticipate the variety of possible customer needs and must rely on employees “local knowledge” to provide solutions that address those needs (Marinova et al. 2008). Given that the selling process of new and existing products often differ (Atuahene-Gima 1997), salespeople may need to have the freedom and self-control to overcome potentially conflicting situations when pursuing both goals. For example, salespeople may need to push new products with new and untested selling procedures that may conflict with current procedures for existing products (e.g., first contact with customer differs). Here, autonomy may effectively reconcile inconsistencies through creative problem solving. This corresponds well to findings in ambidexterity literature that internal organizational tensions resulting from a dual orientation can be resolved by allowing actors easy access to organizational resources, freedom of initiative, and by giving supervisory priority to providing guidance and help rather than to exercising authority (Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004). Hence, we posit:

H7: A sales manager’s ambidextrous selling orientation has a positive relationship with the salesperson’s degree of task autonomy.

In turn, we posit that an individual’s task autonomy is positively related to his/her sales performance. Previous studies describe two main mechanisms through which autonomy influences individual performance (cf. Langfred and Moyer 2004). First, job design literature states that *motivation* is the main mechanism through which autonomy leads to positive outcomes (Hackman and Oldham 1976). By delegating the authority to make decisions, people perceive responsibility for their work outcomes, which causes them to exert more effort and optimize performance. They have the impression that their personal efforts determine outcomes (Man and Lam 2003). When an employee is made responsible for a selling task and deems his or her personal performance as inferior, autonomy offers a causal antecedent that provokes corrective action and additional efforts (Markman et al. 2005). This

motivational argument is likely to hold for new product as well as existing product selling tasks.

Second, also *informational* benefits are expected from increased task autonomy (Langfred and Moye 2004); a salesperson may have information about the customer that is not available to the supervisor. Especially the release of new products on the market may elucidate previously unarticulated customer wants. Sales employees are the first to learn about these new and dynamic needs, as they engage in one-to-one conversations with the customer. They have to assess whether the new product may have led to changes in customers' hierarchy of demands; a task in which they are more proficient than their more distant sales managers (Homburg et al. 2009). Hence, an information asymmetry between employee and manager arises. Under conditions of low task autonomy, sales decisions would be realized in an inefficient way, as the superordinate lacks important information to base the decision on. Under conditions of high task autonomy, employees make better and more efficient decisions that consequently increase their performance.

Of the mechanisms that predict positive effects of autonomy on performance, the informational mechanism applies specifically to new product selling. For existing products, a sales manager knows the drill; he or she is familiar with the key strong and weak points of a product, has a good insight in to what type of customer the product sells, and is informed on the sales arguments used by the sales force. When compared to the sale of new products, informational benefits are not likely to occur during the sale of existing products. Hence, as only the motivational autonomy mechanism is active in the case of existing product selling, but *both* mechanisms apply to a situation of new product selling, we hypothesize that:

- H8: The positive relationship between a salesperson's degree of task autonomy and his or her sales performance is stronger for new products than for existing products.

3.3.4. Contingent Effect of Managerial Performance Feedback and Salesperson Age

It may be cognitively demanding for sales employees to balance their efforts over a portfolio of new and existing products. Especially in a situation of high autonomy, managers may risk employees getting frustrated by being unable to make the right choices, leading to lower sales performance. We investigate whether managers can therefore install other mechanisms that moderate the autonomy-performance relationships. We are also interested to know whether every employee equally experiences the performance-enhancing effects of autonomy. More specifically, we propose that manager performance feedback and employee age moderate the relationships between autonomy and individual sales performance.

Managerial performance feedback. When selling new products, performance feedback may impede salespersons' performance because it may provoke inefficiencies in task execution. In their meta-analysis, Kluger and Denisi (1996) demonstrated that feedback is a double-edged sword as it can both increase and impede performance. Specifically, they found that compared to simple and routine tasks, complex and novel tasks often do not benefit from feedback because performance feedback in complex learning situations often carries inaccurate information that may result in inconsistent responses by the employee (Hammond et al. 1973; Tindale 1989). When executing complex tasks, performance feedback causes individuals to experiment with different task strategies that are often unsuccessful, resulting in poorer task performance (Hammond and Summers 1972). Note that this only can occur if individuals have freedom to experiment with different task strategies. Following this, we posit that high levels of performance feedback reduce the positive effect of autonomy on sales performance for new products.

In contrast, for existing product selling, performance feedback may serve a directive function, such that employees can better focus their attention and effort toward the relevant activities and away from the irrelevant activities (Locke and

Latham 2002). Performance feedback regarding existing product selling has lower probability of carrying inaccurate information. In addition, for routine tasks, such as selling existing products, employees are more likely to react on feedback by working harder, instead of experimenting with new task strategies (e.g., Kluger and DeNisi 1996). Given the routineness of the task, employees may know how to achieve the set goals, but being aware of the status quo may serve an additional motivational purpose. Hence, feedback on where a sales employee stands with respect to his/her targets may augment the positive effect of autonomy on sales performance for existing products, because more effort is allocated towards achieving these targets. In sum, we hypothesize:

H9: As manager performance feedback increases, the positive effect of task autonomy on the salesperson's performance for new products becomes weaker.

H10: As manager performance feedback increases, the positive effect of task autonomy on the salesperson's performance for existing products becomes stronger.

Salesperson age. We posit that age moderates the autonomy–performance relationship differently for new and existing product selling. While some research indicates that age has a negative effect on new product selling because of decreasing cognitive skills (Fu et al. 2009), other research demonstrates that older professionals are likely to take on new and/or more challenging roles (e.g., Avolio et al. 1990; Waldman and Avolio 1986). We extend this debate and posit that when employees have the freedom to choose their tasks, the choice of putting effort in new or existing product selling duties is contingent on their age. On the one hand, we expect that older employees are more inclined to sell new products than existing products. Older workers require challenges to prevent boredom in their work environment as they

already master existing sales approaches. They therefore are more eager to learn and pick up the challenging task of selling new products. Therefore, when given the freedom to select their own tasks, older workers are more likely to prefer the sale of new products over the sale of existing products.

New / Existing Product Sales Performance

(Five-point Likert-type scale; 1 = “strongly disagree,” and 5 = “strongly agree”)

Compared to colleagues in general I am, for selling *new / existing* products, more successful in...

- ...generating a high level of sales volume.
- ...quickly generating sales.
- ...exceeding sales targets set.
- ...assisting the sales manager in achieving the objectives.

New Product Selling Orientation

(Five-point Likert-type scale; 1 = “strongly disagree,” and 5 = “strongly agree”)

My sales managers want me to spend my time and attention primarily to...

- ...selling new products and services in our assortment.
- ...the development of a sales argument for new products and services.
- ...experimenting with the selling tactics for new products and services.
- ...the utilization of selling opportunities for new products.
- ...spotting new, emerging needs of customers.

Existing Product Selling Orientation

(Five-point Likert-type scale; 1 = “strongly disagree,” and 5 = “strongly agree”)

My sales managers want me to spend my time and attention primarily to...

- ...selling existing products in our portfolio.
- ...selling upgrades of existing products and services.
- ...the exploitation of sales arguments for existing products in our assortment.
- ...the complete utilization of selling opportunities for existing products.
- ...maximize the selling performance of existing modules.

Task Autonomy

(Five-point Likert-type scale; 1 = “strongly disagree,” and 5 = “strongly agree”)

- I am allowed complete freedom in selling products.
- I am allowed to sell products the way I think best.
- I am permitted to use my own judgment in selling products.
- I am allowed a high degree of initiative in selling products.

Manager Performance Feedback

(Seven-point Likert-type scale; 1 = “little/few,” and 7 = “much/many”)

- How much feedback does your manager provide regarding your performance ratio for existing/new products?
- How many comments does your manager provide regarding your performance ratio for existing/new products?

Table 3-1: Scale Items for Construct Measures

On the other hand, we anticipate that, when given the choice, younger workers are more likely to prefer the sale of existing products over new products. These sales agents are likely to be concerned with target obtainment and showing their added

value within the sales unit (Cron 1984). Because they are less proficient in executing a range of different selling approaches and still need to build their knowledge base for the different products available in the product portfolio, we posit that younger workers are likely to focus on routinous selling activities that have a higher change of success. Hence, we posit:

H11: As a salesperson's age increases, the positive effect of task autonomy on his or her performance for new products becomes stronger.

H12: As a salesperson's age increases, the positive effect of task autonomy on his or her performance for existing products becomes weaker.

3.4. Data and Method

3.4.1. Sample and Procedure

We selected a Norwegian subsidiary of a large European consumer electronics retailer as our research setting. The consumer electronics industry is appropriate as there are frequent new product launches that lead to diverse product portfolios of new and existing products. Our company has experienced significant sales growth and has consistently been a high performer in the market over the last five years. Each sales agent was responsible for the complete portfolio of products. Based on company records, we selected three product categories that ranked among the top 5% sold in 2009. To prevent any selection biases, we checked 2007 and 2008 records to identify if the sales of these categories have been stable over time. No significant shifts in category rankings were found. The product categories that we considered were: mobile phones, headphones and laptops. Products in these categories are sold frequently and are part of the product portfolio of all salespersons in this study. To discriminate new from existing products we defined a product as "new" when it was introduced into the company's product portfolio during the last 6 months. An existing product, on the other hand, is defined to be introduced into the

company's product portfolio over 12 months ago.

We collected longitudinal data from two separate sources. First, manager selling orientation, task autonomy, individual sales performance, and manager performance feedback were collected by means of a sales employee survey. Six months later, we obtained each salesperson's sales profits (i.e., the individually realized net profit of the three product categories) from company records for the half year period following the survey. We also obtained educational level and salesperson age from company records.

We surveyed 280 sales representatives of the retailer and obtained 104 usable survey responses (response rate: 37.1%). Approximately 82% of the sample was male, the average tenure with the company was 9.25 years, salespeople were on average 28 years old, and mainly finished secondary school. All representatives operated on an individual basis and sold products directly to customers entering the stores.

3.4.2. Measures

The measures employed in the salesperson survey were established after a review of the relevant literature and ten in-depth interviews with sales employees, sales managers, and customers of these sales employees. We constructed a draft questionnaire and retested it with four company managers and representatives, and two industry experts. Based on the pretests, we made minor adjustments in wordings to ensure relevance. Table 3-1 displays the complete item wordings for each measure; the information regarding scale reliabilities and other descriptive statistics appears in Table 3-2.

We assessed "salesperson net profit" with a three-item formative scale that included the profit obtainment for the three different product categories (i.e., mobile phones, headphones and laptops). All latent constructs (i.e., sales performance, managerial selling orientation, autonomy, manager performance feedback) were assessed with multiple statements to which respondents answered on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

Variables	Mean	S.D.	AVE	CR	CA	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. New product selling orientation	3.61	.55	.61	.88	.84	1.000								
2. Existing product selling orientation	3.80	.53	.67	.91	.87	.277**	1.000							
3. Task Autonomy	4.17	.51	.64	.88	.82	.053	.267**	1.000						
4. Feedback	3.96	1.67	.98	.99	.98	.220**	.251**	.229**	1.000					
5. Age	28.28	10.88	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	-.122	-.117	-.046	.045	1.000				
6. Education	2.66	1.13	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	-.116	.033	.094	-.148	-.006	1.000			
7. New product sales performance	3.56	.63	.70	.90	.85	.253**	.260**	.307**	.145	.024	.161	1.000		
8. Existing product sales performance	3.60	.60	.63	.87	.80	.232**	.310**	.231**	.236**	.179*	.012	.639**	1.000	
9. Sales profit	38040.66	37670.44	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	-.012	.064	.155*	.083	.055	.086	.183**	.071	1.000

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

Table 3-2: Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Interconstruct Correlation

We measured “*sales performance*” with a four-item scale developed by Hultink and Atuahene-Gima (2000) and adapted the items to capture both new product selling and existing product selling. New measures were developed for “*managerial selling orientation*,” as we were unable to find existing scales that operationalize how sales managers prioritize selling new versus existing products. We build on scales in organizational learning that measure firm and manager exploratory and exploitative orientations (e.g., Atuahene-Gima 2005; Jansen et al. 2006; Mom et al. 2009) and adapted, tested, and fine-tuned the items based on in-depth interviews with sales managers, salespeople, and support staff. The resulting sales manager orientation scales each consist of five items.

Following prior research (e.g., Atuahene-Gima 2005; He and Wong 2004), we chose a multiplicative measure of managers’ orientation toward the sale of new and existing products to operationalize ambidextrous sales orientation. This method offers the most reliable measure of the ambidexterity phenomenon when compared with other operationalizations such as the absolute difference between the sum of exploration and exploitation. To obtain the ambidexterity measure we first standardized the scales and subsequently multiplied them. Furthermore, “*autonomy*” was assessed using items adapted from De Jong, De Ruyter, and Lemmink’s (2004). We developed a new scale for “*manager performance feedback*” to specifically capture feedback on the ratio between new and existing product selling. Based on our in-depth interviews conducted before starting the quantitative phase of this

research, we concluded that two attributes essentially reflect the performance feedback construct: (1) the amount of feedback and (2) the number of comments.

	<i>Standardized Estimate</i>		
	<i>Model 1 Base Effects</i>	<i>Model 2 Mediated Effects</i>	<i>Model 3 Interactive Effects</i>
<i>Dependent variable: Task autonomy</i>			
Education		.223^a	.223
Age		.030	.030
New product selling orientation		-.088	-.088
Existing product selling orientation		-.137*	-.138*
Ambidextrous selling orientation		.408**	.408**
		.195**	.195**
<i>Dependent variable: New product sales performance</i>			
Education	.279	.358	.426
Age	.298**	.266**	.248**
New product selling orientation	.065	.094*	.107*
Existing product selling orientation	.207**	.303**	.250**
Ambidextrous selling orientation	.148*	.016	.058
Task autonomy	-.183**	-.191**	-.165*
Manager performance feedback		.328**	.297**
Task autonomy x Age	.121*	.034	.031
Task autonomy x Manager performance feedback			.136*
			-.228**
<i>Dependent variable: Existing product sales performance</i>			
Education	.333	.355	.519
Age	.195**	.179**	.173**
New product selling orientation	.170*	.186*	.216**
Existing product selling orientation	.243**	.239**	.166**
Ambidextrous selling orientation	.216**	.148*	.153*
Task autonomy	-.193**	-.197**	-.220**
Manager performance feedback		.173*	.136*
Task autonomy x Age	.181**	.133*	.151*
Task autonomy x Manager performance feedback			-.323**
			.213*
<i>Dependent variable: Sales profit</i>			
Education	.070	.070	.070
Age	.057	.059	.061
New product sales performance	.180*	.179*	.179*
Existing product sales performance	.328*	.329*	.325*
	-.286*	-.286*	-.282*

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

^a Bold italic figures indicate variance explained in endogenous variables.

Notes: t-value is for one-tailed test only. Critical values: 2.364 (p < .01), 1.660 (p < .05).

Table 3-3: Results of Partial Least Squares Analyses

3.4.3. Model and Estimation

We tested our conceptual model using a partial least squares (PLS) approach. This approach allows us to model both reflective and formative (i.e., salesperson net profit) constructs. In addition, PLS is capable of concurrently estimating all conceptual relationships, and when compared to maximum likelihood techniques, PLS does not impose stringent requirements on the sample size and the distribution

of the variables. However, unlike other structural equation modeling approaches, PLS does not provide specific measures of fit (e.g., comparative fit index, root mean square error of approximation). Therefore, to determine relative fit, we examined inter-item correlations that demonstrate that individual items are more strongly related to items from the same latent construct, as opposed to other items. We also examined correlations between latent constructs (see Table 3-1) to ensure that no constructs have correlations approaching 1, which would suggest singularity. All scales have sufficient reliability, with composite reliability and Cronbach's alphas above the .70 threshold. Furthermore, the variance extracted exceeded the .50 threshold for each construct, in support of convergent validity (Table 3-1). Finally, the data in Table 3-1 also indicate the discriminant validity of the constructs because the variance extracted of a construct exceeds the average variance shared with any other study construct.

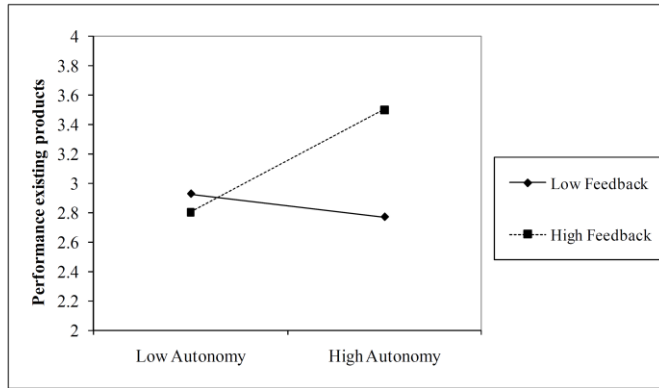
To test the proposed relationships, we first fit a base-line model (Model 1) that covers the hypothesized model depicted in Figure 3-1, but excludes the task autonomy variable and the moderation effects of performance feedback and employee age (i.e., without H5-H10). Next, to test the mediating role of autonomy (Model 2), we included the relationships between sales manager orientation and autonomy and between autonomy and sales performance. Finally, we multiplied the standardized scores of task autonomy and manager performance feedback and age respectively to test whether the effects of autonomy on performance are contingent on these variables. We followed Chin's (1998) recommendation to use bootstrapping (with 500 runs) as the re-sampling procedure.

3.5. Results

3.5.1. Test of Hypothesized Relationships

Table 3-3 shows the coefficient estimates for the hypothesized effects and the variance explained in the endogenous constructs. As Model 1 shows, we found that a

PANEL A: Existing Products



PANEL B: New Products

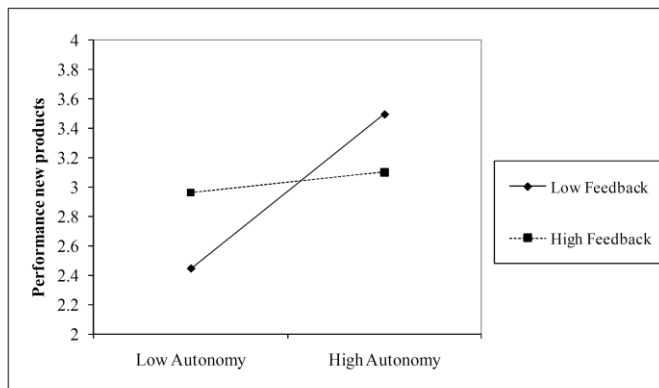


Figure 3-2: Autonomy Moderated by Feedback on Performance for Products

salesperson’s performances for new and existing products differentially affect his or her net profit obtained. More specifically, performance for new products positively affects net profit (Model 1; $\beta = .328$, $p < .05$), while performance for existing products is negatively related to this outcome (Model 1; $\beta = -.286$, $p < .05$). The results support H1; which states that sales performance for new products is more positively related to profit than sales performance for existing products. The negative effect of existing product sales performance on net profit may be explained by the fact that existing products are sold at a price that is on average not profitable. For

instance, existing products may be sold at discount prices that are lower than the cost price. Another explanation could be that storage costs and other overhead are larger for existing products given the longer time period of storage.

We also examine how a sales manager's selling orientation affects a salesperson's sales performance for new and existing products, respectively. The results indicate that an orientation towards the sale of new products positively affects performance for new products (Model 1; $\beta = .207$, $p < .01$), thereby supporting H2. Similarly, H3 is supported as indicated by the positive relationship between existing product selling orientation and performance for existing products (Model 1, $\beta = .216$, $p < .01$). In addition, while Model 1 shows that a manager's orientation towards the sale of existing products positively affects performance for new products ($\beta = .148$, $p < .05$), inclusion of autonomy (Model 2) reveals that this effect is spurious ($\beta = .016$, $p > .10$). However, the positive effect between new product selling orientation and a salesperson's performance for existing products remains positive after inclusion of autonomy (Model 2, $\beta = .239$, $p < .05$). This implies that there are spillover effects from a manager's prioritization of selling new products to the act of selling existing products, but when a manager emphasizes existing product selling, there is no spillover to performance in new product selling. Finally, we tested whether an ambidextrous selling orientation has a negative effect on a salesperson's performance for new and existing products. The results support both H4a (Model 1, $\beta = -.183$, $p < .01$) and H4b (Model 1, $\beta = -.193$, $p < .01$).

Next, we tested the influence of autonomy as a mediator between a sales manager's selling orientation and a salesperson's sales performance (Model 2). In support of H5 and H6, the results indicate that an orientation towards new products is negatively associated with task autonomy (Model 2, $\beta = -.137$, $p < .05$) and that orientation towards existing products is strongly positively associated (Model 2, $\beta = .408$, $p < .01$) with this mediator. Furthermore, ambidextrous selling orientation is positively related to task autonomy (Model 2, $\beta = .195$, $p < .01$), in support of H7. Finally, in support of H8, autonomy has a stronger positive effect on selling

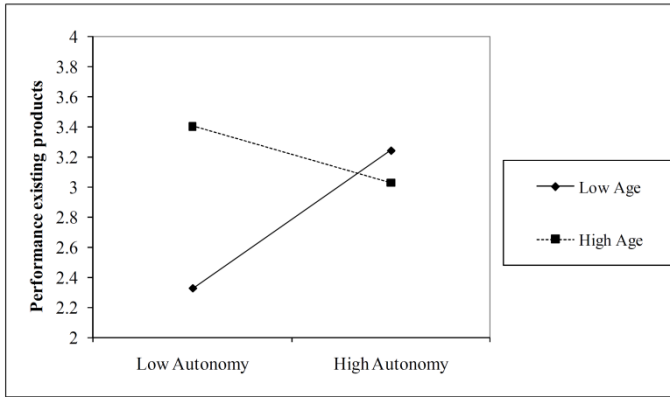
performance for new products (Model 2, $\beta = .328$, $p < .01$) than for existing products (Model 2, $\beta = .173$, $p < .01$).

Finally, we examined the moderating effects of manager performance feedback and age on the autonomy-performance relationships. Model 3 in Table 4 indicates that feedback negatively moderates the relationship between task autonomy and performance for new products (Model 3, $\beta = -.228$, $p < .01$). This result supports H9. In support of H10, feedback positively moderates the relationship between autonomy and performance for existing products (Model 3, $\beta = .213$, $p < .01$). Figure 3-2 provides graphical representations of the moderating effects of performance feedback on the autonomy-performance relationships. We also find that age strengthens the relationship between task autonomy and performance for new products (Model 3, $\beta = .136$, $p < .05$) and weakens the relationship between task autonomy and performance for existing products (Model 3, $\beta = -.323$, $p < .01$). These findings support H11 and H12. Figure 3-3 plots the interactive effects of age and autonomy towards selling performance.

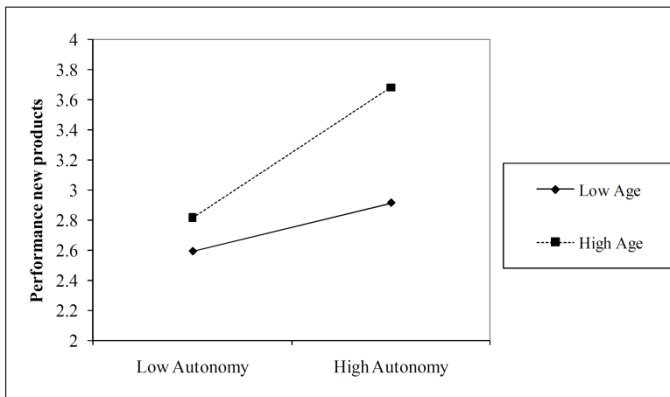
3.5.2. Post Hoc Analysis

To test the effect of manager selling orientation on salesperson net profit obtainment, we calculated the total marginal effects of the manager's selling orientation on net profit. In calculating these total marginal effects we followed the procedure used by (Marinova et al. 2008). This implies that we fix the effect of one managerial orientation (i.e., at a high value of +2 SD or a low value of -2 SD) while calculating the total marginal effect of the other orientation. As a result, four different total marginal effects can be calculated; two that reflect an ambidextrous selling orientation and two that reflect a singular selling orientation. Table 4 shows an overview of these four effects and the results of the calculations.

PANEL A: Existing Products



PANEL B: New Products

**Figure 3-3: Autonomy Moderated by Feedback on Performance for Products**

The findings show that an ambidextrous orientation is very likely to outperform a singular orientation, depending on the amount of feedback a manager provides and the age of a salesperson. Notably, the findings reveal that an ambidextrous orientation is particularly powerful if age is high and feedback is low. In specific, we found that the managerial feedback and age are important contingencies in determining the total marginal effect of existing product selling orientation on net profit (i.e., range from $-.397$ to $.467$), while the total marginal effect of new product selling orientation is positive, irrespective of the age and performance feedback (i.e.,

range from .200 to .472).

	<i>Selling Orientation^a</i>	<i>Total Marginal Effect (TME)</i>	<i>Range TME^b</i>
Ambidextrous orientation	New product selling	$\frac{\partial Profit}{\partial Mornew} = .336 + .034 * Age - .034 * Feedb$	[.200; .472]
	Existing product selling	$\frac{\partial Profit}{\partial Morext} = .035 + .109 * Age - .107 * Feedb$	[-.397; .476]
Singular orientation	New product selling	$\frac{\partial Profit}{\partial Mornew} = -.230 - .072 * Age + .070 * Feedb$	[-.514; .054]
	Existing product selling	$\frac{\partial Profit}{\partial Morext} = -.005 + .003 * Age - .003 * Feedb$	[-.017; .007]

^a Total marginal effect of selling orientation on net profit given high level (i.e., + 2 SD, Ambidextrous orientation) or low level (-2 SD, Singular orientation) of other orientation.

^b The range of the total marginal effect on net profit given high (+2 SD) or low (-2 SD) levels of age and feedback.

Table 3-4: Total Marginal Effect of Manager Orientation on Salesperson Net Profit Obtainment

Furthermore, the results indicate that a singular orientation is hardly related to a salespersons’ net profit result. Remarkably, a singular orientation on new product selling may even be detrimental for net profit obtainment when the frontline mechanisms are not well aligned. Particularly, when age is high and feedback is low, the total marginal effect of a new product selling orientation is negative (i.e., -.514). Furthermore, an existing product selling orientation, combined with a low new product selling orientation, hardly affects net profit scores, regardless of the sales force age and the levels of performance feedback (i.e., range from -.017 to .007). In sum, the results indicate that an ambidextrous manager makes salespeople contribute to net profit, but the effectiveness depends on salesperson’s age and managerial performance feedback.

3.6. Discussion

This study explores how employees may be lead to behave ambidextrously and sell both new and existing products in a retail setting. Although previous research recognized the tensions that may occur between supply chain partners during new product introductions (Hughes and Ahearne 2010; Tsay 2001), we are not aware of any study addressing the idiosyncratic challenges that retail sales managers face—adopting and selling new products while reducing existing products stock levels. We

adopt an intra-retailer approach to this dilemma and explain when and why the pursuit of new and existing product selling, as conveyed in a sales manager's selling orientation, results in higher or lower net profit outcomes. We find that a frontline management mechanism consisting of the interplay between task autonomy, managerial performance feedback, and employee age acts as the key mediator in transferring managerial selling orientations to sales performance and, ultimately, net profit.

3.6.1. Effects of Manager Orientation on Net Profit Obtainment

Our study has several implications when considering the impact of manager orientation on salesperson net profit obtainment. First, they suggest that the focus on the salesperson performance (e.g., sales volume, number of product sold) is likely to posit an incomplete, if not misleading, representation of salespersons' contribution to the bottom-line—i.e., researchers should consider its effect on profit. Second, the results indicate that retailers indeed do profit from having ambidextrous sales managers, but only when they are able to align the frontline mechanisms to their selling orientation. Moreover, the results reveal that managers oriented towards either new or existing product selling are likely to end up with low or even negative net profit scores. As such, we add to organizational learning literature, where studies are inconclusive on the effects of ambidexterity; some report positive effects (e.g., Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004; He and Wong 2004), while others show negative outcomes (e.g., Atuahene-Gima 2005). Third, the findings indicate that it is important for ambidextrous managers to provide little feedback on salespeople's performance. In doing so, the highest profits are obtained by older salespeople. Thus, the results indicate that ambidextrous managers should resist their temptation to 'over-manage' their sales force by constantly giving feedback on their performance.

3.6.2. Effects of Manager Orientation on Sales Performance

When abstracting from the profit-focused discussion above, an important conclusion

of our study is that a sales manager's selling orientation is crucial in directing sales performance of subordinates. In general, salespeople comply with the selling priorities set by their managers. We find that a manager's new product selling orientation positively influences new product selling performance ($\beta = .250, p < .01$), while an existing product selling orientation does not ($\beta = .058, n.s.$). Similarly, a manager's existing product selling orientation positively affects the individual selling performance for existing products ($\beta = .153, p < .05$). Remarkably though, an orientation on new product selling also has a positive effect on a salesperson's performance for existing products ($\beta = .166, p < .01$). A potential explanation, in line with previous literature, is that salespeople are inherently inclined to sell and generate sales with proven sellers because they have knowledge about all product features and how they address customer needs (Atuahene-Gima 1997; Wieseke et al. 2008). As another major result, we find that a manager's ambidextrous selling orientation—i.e., prioritizing the sales of both new and existing products—has a negative impact on the sales performance for new ($\beta = -.165, p < .05$) and existing products ($\beta = -.220, p < .01$). This finding confirms the notion that salespeople have difficulty in dealing with divergent objectives during their goal accomplishment (Locke and Latham 2002). However, as we showed already in the previous section, through the alignment of frontline mechanisms, an ambidextrous selling orientation may still turn out to be very beneficial for bottom-line results.

3.6.3. Mediating Role of Autonomy

From our results it follows that task autonomy is a core element that managers may use to install a frontline management mechanism. Consistent with arguments made in previous research, the importance of autonomy becomes greater for achieving more complex and challenging tasks, such as the sale of new products (Langfred and Moye 2004). For an ambidextrously oriented manager, task autonomy may fulfill a compensatory role in affecting sales performance. Indeed, we find that managers' attempt to match the autonomy afforded to sales force with the demands of the selling task. A manager putting greater emphasis on new product selling provides

lower levels of task autonomy ($\beta = -.138$ $p < .05$). When prioritizing existing product selling or ambidextrous behavior, managers increase sales employee's task autonomy. Finally, task autonomy has a significant, direct positive effect on sales performance for both new and existing products. Consistent with arguments in literature (Langfred and Moye 2004), our results reveal that autonomy is more important for a complex task such a new product selling because more informational benefits are present in this situation.

3.6.4. Contingent Role of Performance Feedback and Age

We also conclude that the defined frontline management mechanism affects each individual differently. More specifically, the effectiveness of task autonomy in boosting individual sales performance is dependent on an employee's age and the amount of performance feedback he/she receives from the sales manager. As anticipated, our results show that manager performance feedback amplifies the positive impact of autonomy on existing product selling performance (see Panel A, Figure 3-2). In these circumstances, feedback may serve a directive purpose, such that employees become motivated by clarifying roles and expected outcomes. In addition, managerial feedback reduces the positive impact of autonomy on new product selling performance (see Panel B, Figure 3-2). When selling new products, feedback may result in a quest for a better sales approach thereby lowering the efficiency of salespeople when selling new products.

Finally, we expected age to moderate the autonomy–performance relationships and found interesting differential effects. Age reduces autonomy's positive effect on sales performance for existing products (see Panel A, Figure 3-3), but amplifies autonomy's positive effect on sales performance for new products (see Panel B, Figure 3-3). Hence, when provided with task autonomy as a result of a manager's existing or ambidextrous selling orientation, older salespeople seek more challenging sales activities and are more inclined to sell new products. These findings are consistent with previous literature that suggests that older sales employees allocate more time to challenging sales tasks (Cron 1984). Younger

employees who often are relatively new to the sales job might comply with existing selling routines and norms, which is most easily done by selling proven products.

3.6.5. Managerial Implications

Given the higher profits generated with the sale of new products, sales managers might be tempted to allocate more attention and effort towards this selling activity. However, managers should realize that such a view is shortsighted, since neglecting the sale of existing products will result in future losses as profit margins drop, storage costs increase, and these products suffer from customer perceptions of devaluation.

In their strive for selling both new and existing products, managers are advised to emphasize both objectives to their sales people. However, it is important to carefully align the frontline mechanisms, because misalignment can result in significant net profit drops. Our study reveals that managers should grant salespeople autonomy to effectively deal with potential trade-offs in the joint pursuit of new and existing products. Shifting decision-making power to the front line and giving employees the freedom to allocate their resources in the most effective and efficient manner enables them to better match each type of product with dynamic customer demands. The managerial urge to be updated on every sale and its associated strategy should be resisted. Instead, it may be better to loosen the strict monitoring regime and introduce sales meetings every two weeks or once a month. These meetings, rather than daily monitoring, serve the purpose to bring a sales manager up to speed on developments in customer needs. As such, managers need to rely on the “local knowledge” that sales employees rapidly develop when interacting with a multitude of customers.

In addition, our results indicate that managers should be careful when providing their employees feedback on their performance during the sale of new and existing products. Managers who worry about existing product sales while emphasizing selling new products may use performance feedback as a signaling mechanism. Yet, the power of autonomy is dependent on the manager’s feedback on an employee’s

selling performance. More specifically, when updating an employee on the status quo of his or her new and existing products sold, the sale of existing products is stimulated as subordinates are motivated when they know how far they are from a target. In contrast, high autonomy only benefits new product sales performance when a sales manager provides *little* performance feedback on an employee's performance. By giving continuous feedback on a salesperson's target obtainment, managers fail to adequately recognize the individual's learning curve, restrict the salesperson's opportunity to engage in adaptive selling (Sujan et al. 1988), and signal a managerial distrust in the person's abilities to obtain targets for unstructured tasks.

As the moderating effects of feedback on the autonomy–performance relationships diverge for existing and new products, this leaves managers with the dilemma whether to provide feedback to subordinates or not. The answer to this dilemma is to differentiate the feedback depending on the age of the employee. When given autonomy, more tenured salespeople will be more motivated to sell new products as they are more challenged and stimulated to exert effort to an unstructured situation. Our results show that in this situation little feedback is required. Thus, managers should provide older employees who prefer the sale of new products with little feedback to optimize their performance for new products. In contrast, in autonomous work environments, younger sales agents are driven to sell existing products. Consistent with our results, we suggest that managers should support the learning curve of younger employees by providing them adequate performance feedback. Thus, younger employees that who prefer the sale of existing products should be complemented with managerial feedback on their sales performance for existing products. Ultimately, to balance the sales of new and existing products, we propose that sales managers should design well-balanced sales units consisting of both younger and older sales agents. As such, sales agents within these units may take up different roles and responsibilities regarding the sale of new and existing products and may behave ambidextrous at the *unit-level*.

Finally, our results indicate that it is important for retail companies to recruit and train ambidextrous sales managers. Research shows that ambidextrous managers are able to resolve contradictions, multitask, and continuously refine their knowledge and skills (Mom et al. 2009). Therefore, recruitment could target individuals that are capable to deal with paradoxes in work situations and can quickly adapt to changes in the environment. Furthermore, retail companies could train sales managers to connect with other organization members across hierarchical levels and organization units. This *connectedness* enables sales managers to tap into a diverse pool of opinions, knowledge bases, and skills within the company, which is likely to increase the appreciation for and implementation of an ambidextrous sales orientation (Mom et al. 2009).

3.6.6. Limitations and Further Research

This study provides key insights into the management of new and existing product selling processes. However, as with all research, the empirical study has some limitations but also offers numerous opportunities for future research.

First, the small sample size has the potential to reduce statistical power and inflate Type II errors. To address this issue, we conducted partial least square (PLS) analysis to derive appropriate estimates and standard deviations in the subsequent structural estimation of the model. PLS is especially suitable for small sample sizes as it has no requirements regarding the normality of the data. Overall, the statistical support for our model is large, which alleviates concerns of inadequate power. Nevertheless, future replications and validation studies may be needed. Second, we suggest caution in generalizing our findings beyond retail organizations. Although we expect that a comparable pattern of effects will emerge in other sales contexts, validation in different settings is needed. For instance, when compared to business-to-business setting, the sales cycles in retail settings are short and generally uncomplicated. This could affect the role of autonomy and its moderators (cf. Langfred and Moya 2004).

Our findings provide a foundation for additional research that might uncover

important managerial mechanisms that further inform both theory and practice. For example, when considering the effects of a salesperson age and managerial performance feedback in our model, two research questions are applicable. First: do other personal factors such as sales experience, company tenure, and industry experience also affect the effectiveness of autonomy? Second: is the moderating effect of managerial performance feedback dependent on how “new” a new product is exactly? In other words, when do the performance-weakening effects of feedback for new products turn into performance-enhancing effects for existing products? Finally, although we focused on how retailers can manage the simultaneous sales of new and existing products, manufacturer actions and tactics may also direct salesperson behavior. Exploring the impact of upstream partners’ selling orientations on retailers’ sales force performance may be an interesting future research topic.

Chapter 4: *Helping Colleagues Sell New Products: Impacts of Team Diversity and Position within the Team*³

In the modern era of team-based product selling, companies must foster intra-team helping behaviors by individual salespeople driven by individual goals. This study analyzes how team composition, in terms of diversity and members' positions within the sales team, affect each salesperson's prosocial attitudes and behaviors, as well as his or her new product selling performance. Using survey and time-lagged archival data from 211 salespeople in 32 sales teams, the authors find strong support for a combined impact of team diversity and individual position on willingness to help colleagues. Contrasting effects arise for team composition with regard to sales experience and expected demand: To benefit from experienced members, team diversity should be low, whereas to benefit from salespeople's high expected demand for the new product, team diversity should be high. Finally, the findings reveal that team members who help peers most diminish the performance differences among team members and succeed better in selling new products than their less helpful counterparts.

³ This research was conducted in collaboration with Ad de Jong and Ed Nijssen. An adapted version of this chapter is currently under revision for the Journal of Marketing.

4.1. Introduction

To cope with complex, dynamic market environments, organizations increasingly rely on sales teams (Cummings 2007). As Ahearne and colleagues (2010a, p. 461) explain, the “purpose of having sales people work together is to create synergies among team members with different levels of skills and experiences.” Team-based selling models help firms achieve coordinated strategy, greater cross-selling, and develop better customer solutions (Moorman and Albrecht 2008). Although involvement of people from different functions has been suggested, Homburg, Workman, and Jensen (2002) show that the great majority (89%) of firms rely on functional sales teams. Such functional sales teams are particularly useful for selling newly developed products. Surrounded by uncertainty, this task lacks established procedures and therefore benefits substantially when individual team members with different degrees of expertise can advise and assist each other and elaborate on different points-of-view to develop an effective sales approach and boost new product sales quickly (Fu et al. 2010).

However, the use of such sales teams to sell new products is by no means a panacea, because diversity also breeds tension. Research reports that members of teams with highly diverse experience, skills, and attitudes are less, rather than more, inclined to help their peers (Van der Vegt et al. 2003). These diverse teams thus may suffer reduced intra-group learning or team performance compared with less diverse teams. In addition, each salesperson’s motivation to assist colleagues may be tempered by corporate reward structures for sales agents that remain linked to individual performance (Suff and Reilly 2006). Thus the challenge, for managers and researchers alike, is to understand how sales team diversity influences the prosocial attitudes and helping behaviors of sales representatives to facilitate the successful sale of new products.

Team diversity could have moderating impacts along several dimensions, such as functional expertise, goal orientation, or task knowledge (Harrison and Klein 2007; Jackson and Joshi 2004; Joshi et al. 2006; Van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007),

though findings about these moderating roles remain inconclusive. Some studies demonstrate how team diversity weakens relationships between predictors (e.g., service climate, inter-team support, leadership behaviors) and performance outcomes (e.g., team potency, service quality; Schneider et al. 2002); others indicate that diversity enhances the relationship (De Jong et al. 2005) or is unrelated to it (e.g., Ahearne et al. 2010a). To offer more complex and sophisticated models of diversity (Van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007), one interesting suggestion is to consider team members' positions. The unique position each person has in a team may explain why members perceive and experience within-team variation or diversity differently (Harrison and Klein 2007) and in turn display different prosocial attitudes or behaviors. Considering team diversity and positions within the team together seems especially relevant for unstandardized processes, such as sales of new products, which feature substantial task variation and divergent customer demand. Some recent studies note the role of the social context during product selling, and research increasingly addresses the selling process for new products (Ahearne et al. 2010b), but the focus thus far has been on individual salespersons' characteristics (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, experience) as drivers of new product sales (Ahearne et al. 2010b; Fu et al. 2010; Wieseke et al. 2008), rather than on teams or team composition.

In response, this study examines how team diversity and individual position within the team *jointly* affect the prosocial attitude–behavior relationship for team members and, in turn, their sales performance in relation to new products. Both factors should affect prosocial attitudes and behaviors. In particular, a salesperson's *team identification* refers to his or her affective commitment to other members of a team; *helping* is the behavior of backing up, coordinating with, and motivating teammates. Among various characteristics, we also consider two factors that are prominent in sales literature and likely to influence sales team effectiveness for new product sales, namely, sales experience and expected demand (Wieseke et al. 2008).

Because the ultimate goal of diverse teams and their supportive group processes

is to enhance performance outcomes, we address the potentially positive effects on new product sales performance. Previous studies have shown that intra-team helping drives team performance, yet little is known about the impact of individual team workers' social behaviors, such as helping, on their own sales performance. Time allocated to helping distracts from the pursuit of individual sales goals, but helping also should facilitate higher team performance. Therefore, we note the impact of helping on both individual sales performance *relative* to teammates' performance (i.e., individual position on sales performance), as well as on sales performance measured as a *distance* from colleagues. The distance measure reveals improvements in overall team performance, in that it captures the average absolute difference between a focal salesperson and other team members. To our knowledge, this study is the first to acknowledge the effects of task-specific helping behaviors on individual salesperson performance and other team members' performance using objective, time-lagged data.

4.2. Conceptual Background

4.2.1. Team Diversity and Individual Position

The term "team diversity" describes the composition of a social unit (Jackson and Joshi 2011) according to the average level of variation among members of a unit. Team diversity can range from low to high.⁴ Although it is possible to measure overall diversity, most research acknowledges diversity according to individual characteristics or attributes, such as experience, goal orientation, or functional background (Van Knippenberg and Schippers 2007). Minimum diversity indicates no differences between individual members on a specific attribute; maximum diversity implies two opposing subgroups, such that half the members score low,

⁴ In this study, we focus on team diversity in attributes or characteristics that can be ranked along a continuum. We do not include team diversity for attributes that differ in kind or category, such as functional diversity.

while the other half scores high on an attribute (see the Appendix, Figure A1).

The concept of team diversity is rooted mainly in theories of *social categorization* and *information/decision making* (Williams and O'Reilly 1998), though they draw different conclusions regarding the influence of diversity on team processes and performance. The former theory focuses on relational aspects of a team and posits that diversity leads to the formation of subgroups (i.e., categorizations) that hamper team cooperation as a whole and reduce team performance (e.g., Jehn et al. 1999; Tsui et al. 1992; Van der Vegt et al. 2003). The latter theory instead focuses on task-related aspects and emphasizes the positive role of diversity, such that in diverse teams, members have access to a broader range of task-relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities, which should increase team performance (Ancona and Caldwell 1992; Bantel and Jackson 1989; De Dreu and West 2001). Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, and Homan (2004) argue that both perspectives are relevant and should be combined to study the impact of team diversity on supportive group processes, such as team reflexivity, elaboration of task-relevant information, or helping, to overcome inconclusive prior results.

Furthermore, increasing research predicts diversity as a moderator of performance relationships in front-line units, though with inconclusive results. Joshi, Liao, and Jackson (2006) note a moderating impact of demographic diversity on the relationships of age, gender, and race with salesperson performance. Schneider, Salvaggio, and Subirats (2002) also show that more diverse perceptions of service climate (i.e., low service climate strength) negatively moderates the effect of that service climate on customer perceptions of service quality, because intra-team disagreement creates uncertainty about how to behave as a team member, which reduces service performance. Furthermore, Ahearne and colleagues (2010a) find that diversity in workers' perceptions of their leader's empowering behaviors negatively moderates the impact of those behaviors on the sales team's potency, but they offer no support for a moderating impact of diversity in team climate on a climate-potency relationship. In contrast, De Jong, de Ruyter, and Wetzels (2005) indicate

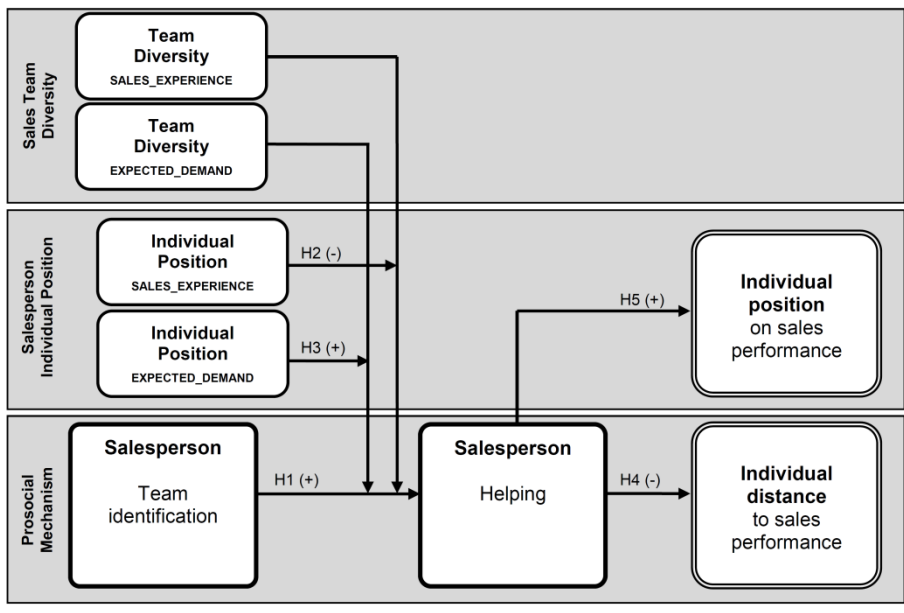
that management support, interteam support, and team tenure have greater impacts on group potency when teams exhibit more social diversity. These mixed, inconclusive findings indicate the need to consider more sophisticated models of the team diversity–team outcome relationship.

One interesting way to extend existing models of team diversity might consider the individual position of team members (Harrison and Klein 2007). An employee's individual position within the team represents a unique micro-context that can seriously affect his or her perceptions and interpretations of the team's diversity (cf. Tyler and Blader 2003). In particular, whereas team diversity indicates the average variation between members on a certain attribute, a member's individual position reflects his or her score on this attribute compared with all (other) team members. Team diversity and individual position do not necessarily correlate, because a person can occupy a low or high individual position within the team, whether levels of team diversity are high or low (see the Appendix, Figure A2). Several researchers thus emphasize the importance of individual position (within the team) to gain a proper understanding of the effect of team diversity. Harrison and Klein (2007, p. 1223), for example, assert that team diversity and an employee's position on the team should be examined together because "the extent of separation, variety, or disparity within a unit may color and shape an individual's experience of difference from other unit members." A relatively inexperienced member may have a more favorable view of overall team diversity than his or her more experienced colleagues, because these newcomers generally are more receptive to new experiences and ideas (Atuahene-Gima 1997; Cron 1984). Similarly, Chattopadhyay (1999) shows that younger employees, compared with their relatively older counterparts, respond more favorably to age diversity in a team.

4.2.2. Relevant Attributes of Sales Team Diversity

According to sales literature (e.g., Wieseke et al. 2008), two task-related characteristics are particularly relevant for salespeople's performance with regard to new products, and thus for sales team diversity: sales experience and expected

demand for the new product. *Sales experience* relates to the task knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform a sales job effectively (Ahearne et al. 2010b; Fu 2009); it provides an important predictor of salespeople’s motivations, job attitudes, and work perceptions (Cron and Slocum 1986; Rapp et al. 2006), especially in new product sales settings (Ahearne et al. 2010b; Fu 2009). Thus *diversity* in experience seems highly relevant, because the uncertainty surrounding new product sales and the high variability of the task (i.e., no standard selling approaches) makes this attribute particularly salient and important (Gruber et al. 2008).



Notes: The bolds words in each box show the level of analysis.

- Data from sales team members (t = 1)
- Data from company database (t = 2)

Figure 4-1: Conceptual Framework

Expected demand instead refers to a “momentary belief concerning the likelihood that a particular act will be followed by a particular outcome” (Vroom 1964, p. 17). In the specific case of expected customer demand for new products, it entails an expectation that a new product’s launch will cause one or more groups of

customers to show interest, consider, and adopt the new product. Salespeople often attempt to evaluate a new product from the customer's point of view to determine if it is worthwhile to exert time and effort in its sale (Wieseke et al. 2008). Because it is more difficult to assess product features and links to customer needs for new compared with existing products (Homburg et al. 2009), *variation* in expected demand for new products should influence the team processes of units that sell new products (Ahearne et al. 2010b).

4.3. Framework and Hypotheses

With our conceptual framework of new product selling (see Figure 4-1), we investigate how team diversity and individual position within the team, along the attributes of sales experience and expected demand (top and middle layers), together influence the prosocial attitude-behavior mechanism, which consists of the relationship between a salesperson's team identification and his or her intra-team helping behaviors (bottom layer). We complement this framework with a consideration of the influence of the individual team member's helping on sales performance. In this case, we distinguish two types of performance: the salesperson's *individual position* within the team (i.e., ranking or relative score) and performance *distance* from the other team members (i.e., absolute performance difference between a focal employee and fellow team members).

4.3.1. Team Identification and Helping

Following previous research (Janssen and Huang 2008; Van der Vegt et al. 2003), we focus on team identification and helping behavior as two important and positive prosocial aspects of a team. *Team identification* is the extent to which an individual member feels emotionally attached to, involved with, and committed to a team (Meyer et al. 1990). This perception of oneness with or belongingness to a team describes an affective state by a person toward a team, not his or her actual behavior. People with high team identification consider the team's goals, interests, and norms as if they were their own (Dutton et al. 1994; Van Knippenberg 2000). *Helping* is

the extent to which an individual team member shares his or her task-specific expertise, motivates other team members, and exhibits prosocial behaviors during the process of selling new products (Organ 1988). Thus, unlike identification as an affective state, helping is a behavior or behavioral process (Marks et al. 2001). However, the two constructs are positively associated.

Tyler and Blader (2003) argue that discretionary behaviors, such as helping, originate mainly from a person's team identity—beyond the incentives that flow from rewards and sanctions—because this identity stimulates feelings of belongingness, comfort, and happiness (Haslam et al. 2000). Team members who strongly identify with their team have a strong motivation to contribute to the group's goals and team success (De Cremer and Van Vugt 1999; Van Knippenberg 2000) and thus will help each other. Leading into this primary motivational force of identification are affective states, because individual self-esteem becomes contingent on the group's status and perceived value (Hirst et al. 2009; Tyler and Blader 2003). High team identifiers try to develop or maintain the group's status by helping teammates execute their sales tasks. For example, Van der Vegt, van de Vliert, and Oosterhof (2003) demonstrate that in multidisciplinary teams, individual team identification has a positive effect on loyalty intentions and intra-team helping behaviors. Similarly, Janssen and Huang (2008) show that team identification positively affects intra-team helping in middle management banking teams. We expect similar influences of identification in a sales team context. Therefore:

H₁: A salesperson's team identification relates positively to his or her helping.

4.3.2. Moderating Role of Team Diversity and Individual Position

Differences in sales experience alter communication styles, uses of technical jargon, and information-processing capabilities (Cron 1984; Fu 2009; Levy and Sharma 1994; Murphy and Wright 1984; Rapp et al. 2006). Similarly, differences in expected demand produce varying opinions about the real value of a new product for customers and how to proceed with its sale. Such team differences, or diversities,

may decrease the impact of individual team identification on intra-team helping; Ashforth and Mael (1989) contend that the impact of team identification on pro-team activities mainly depends on the degree to which team members agree on the group's goals or how to obtain them (Hirst, van Dick, and van Knippenberg 2009). Perhaps then team diversity in sales experience and expected demand weakens the effect of a salesperson's team identification on helping.

However, Tyler and Blader (2003, p. 360) also offer a group engagement model, in which the impact of team identification on helping depends not only on team-level characteristics (e.g., diversity) but also on the employee's position within the team, such that "people's interest in how others in the group view them leads to attention to their unique and valuable attributes, as ... identified by them and by others in the group." Thus, individual position may represent an important micro-climate variable and determinant of intra-team helping behaviors. We accordingly posit that the team identification–helping relationship depends on the *combination* of team diversity and employees' individual positions within the team. We develop this idea for two relevant contingency variables.

Sales experience. People who identify with the team and have achieved a high individual position through their sales experience offer value to the team by helping less experienced colleagues sell new products. However, they are not always motivated to do so. In which conditions are salespeople with greater experience most motivated to help their teammates? Social exchange theory contends that people engage in social exchanges out of the expectation of receiving benefits from mutual contributions to the relationship (Blau 1964; Homans 1958; Thibaut and Kelley 1959). Social exchange relationships thus "develop between two parties through a series of mutual, although not necessarily simultaneous, exchanges that yield a pattern of reciprocal obligation in each party" (Masterson et al. 2000, p. 739). Applying this principle of social exchange to a sales team, we posit that a team member's motivation to help his or her colleagues depends on a judgment of expected benefits and costs associated with helping or not helping. Helping builds

goodwill, leads to expert power and recognition, and creates an obligation for other members to reciprocate, though it demands high costs in terms of time and effort. Not helping may involve reputation loss or retaliation, and thus also involve cost, though the salesperson does not have to devote immediate time or effort to helping behaviors. Although team membership and team identification provide basic normative motivations to engage in social exchanges, other conditions, such as team composition and degree of expertise, also should influence whether experts feel responsible (Thomas-Hunt et al. 2003).

If the team's sales experience diversity is low, a team identifier with a high individual position may be the only experienced member on the sales team and likely feels tremendous normative pressure to help the team and colleagues. Perceptions of normative pressure are highly salient when individual members stand apart because of their experience (Ehrhart and Naumann 2004; Terry and Hogg 1996). Not helping teammates then carries the risk of not only team failure but also loss of reputation or exclusion from the team. Because individual performance in a team setting largely depends on maintaining good relationships with colleagues, the benefits of helping clearly outweigh the costs in this situation.

In highly diverse teams characterized by two subgroups, a team identifier with a high individual position instead may be less willing to help less experienced team members, according to a phenomenon called diffused responsibility (Yamagishi and Cook 1993). When they belong to a subgroup of experts in the team, people feel less normative pressure, and the shared sense of responsibility may provoke the experienced members to avoid being the first to take on the burden and risk of helping others, before their other experienced peers. The resulting passive attitude among team identifiers with a high individual experience position minimizes help for colleagues in the inexperienced subgroup. Thus we anticipate that the motivation to help colleagues is stronger for team identifiers with high individual positions, based on their sales experience, when the team's experience diversity is low rather than high. Therefore,

H₂: With regard to sales experience, team diversity and the salesperson's individual position interact, such that (a) the positive relationship between team identification and helping is strongest when team diversity is low and individual position is high, but (b) the positive relationship between team identification and helping is weakest when both team diversity and individual position are high.

Expected demand. When team members have higher outcome expectations, they tend to be more inclined to help (Kluemper et al. 2009), because they are more confident about the instrumentality of their helping as a means to achieve their goals (McAllister et al. 2007). Salespersons with positive beliefs about favorable outcomes for a task also are more likely to exert effort in the task (Dixon and Schertzer 2005; Scheier and Carver 1985; Schulman 1999).

Furthermore, when a team features low diversity and most members express low expectations, an individual sales representative with a high expectancy offers a deviating perspective, which makes convincing or helping others both difficult and costly (Bassili 2003). Moreover, expressing divergent, positive beliefs creates a risk of potential conflict and image loss, such as being considered difficult by others (Tyler and Blader 2003). The uncertain character of new product introductions and forecasts (Ahearne et al. 2010b) likely enhances the chance of such negative outcomes. Therefore, a team identifier with a high individual position, based on expected demand, probably is less willing to help others in a less diverse team.

In contrast, in a highly diverse team, a subgroup of likeminded salespeople all believe in the potential of the new product, so a salesperson with a high individual position on expected demand attains support from one or more other team members who share the responsibility and cost of engaging in debate and intra-team helping. The effect of this salesperson's team identification on helping should be stronger; social psychology literature even demonstrates that people who are part of a larger

subgroup express their opinions more quickly than those who hold a minority position (Bassili 2003). Therefore, we expect team identifiers with a high expected demand position in diverse teams to be more motivated to sell a new product, engage in convincing, and help team colleagues, because they think it is instrumental to their cause. That is, the motivation to help colleagues is stronger for team identifiers with high individual positions, based on expected demand, when the team's expected demand diversity is high rather than low.

H₃: With regard to expected demand, team diversity and the salesperson's individual position interact, such that (a) the positive relationship between team identification and helping is strongest when both team diversity and individual position are high, but (b) the positive relationship between team identification and helping is weakest when team diversity is low and individual position is high.

4.3.3. Outcomes of New Product Helping Behaviors

Finally, salespeople's helping behaviors should influence two key sales performance outcomes of the new product selling process: *distance* and relative *individual position*.

Distance. This performance outcome captures the absolute performance difference between a focal employee and the average of his or her fellow team members with regard to selling a new product (Tsui et al. 1992). When the team achieves an average quota of 100%, one member who scores 90% and another who scores 110% each equal performance differences compared with the team average.

Teams commonly aspire to increase their overall knowledge base by encouraging more knowledgeable members to help less knowledgeable members (Van der Vegt et al. 2006). This diffusion of knowledge should improve individual and team performance (Janssen and Huang 2008). Prior research confirms that helping behavior leads to higher levels of shared task representations and better team performance (Pieterse et al. 2011). The benefits are not limited to weaker members

but help strong members too. Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1997b) argue that employees who readily help others learn the ropes and deal with task-related issues make the newcomers (more) productive team members. In a new product selling context, helping behaviors should increase shared understanding of new product features, customer need information, and best practices, which will help each team member become a more effective sales agent. Thus, at higher helping levels, performance distances should decrease.

Individual position. This performance outcome requires a score or ranking of new product selling performance compared with the performance of other team members (cf. Van der Vegt et al. 2006). For example, if the team achieves an average quota of 100%, a salesperson scoring 110% outranks a colleague scoring 90%.

Empirical evidence shows that people who help more receive more reciprocal aid from team members (Van der Vegt et al. 2006). In addition, a helper may benefit from cognitive elaboration and reflection on ideas, information, and abilities (O'Donnell and Dansereau 1992; Ploetzner et al. 1999; Webb 1989; Webb 1992). In a review of 19 classroom learning studies, Webb (1989) shows that helping others by providing personal explanations yields better learning outcomes for the helper. Similarly, among teams of middle managers in the banking industry, Janssen and Huang (2008) find that helping positively affects the helper's own personal effectiveness. Helping, by sharing expertise, gives the helpers the opportunity to assess and improve their own knowledge and selling methods, which can improve personal sales performance for new products. Therefore,

H₄: Helping relates negatively to a salesperson's distance sales performance.

H₅: Helping relates positively to a salesperson's relative individual position sales performance.

4.4. Methodology

4.4.1. Research Setting, Sample, and Procedure

We collected data from functional sales teams of a large information and communications technology (ICT) company located in The Netherlands that sells products to 500 top companies in Europe. The sales teams exclusively contained salespeople who focused on a particular customer type and technical specialty/product. These teams coordinate their sales efforts and share information about customer needs, sales tactics, and outcomes. Approximately 10–15% of salespeople's total variable compensation is based on meeting sales team targets.

The company's product portfolio consists of ICT products, such as workspace management systems, connectivity solutions, and datacenters. Its strategy is to secure and expand its position with existing customers by selling both existing and new products. As is common in the ICT industry (Lu and Yang 2004), many new products launch annually, which requires the sales force to explore chances to sell new innovations while simultaneously capitalizing on their current activities. The complexity of the products and markets means sales processes can take more than six months. A significant portion of total annual revenue, 28%, comes from new products. On average it takes 3.5 years for the entire product portfolio to be replaced.

The sales force receives briefings about new products prior to their launch. The new product meetings provide the sales force with information about technical features, marketing strategies, and additional resources. Consistent with general practices in other industries (Fu et al. 2010), no product-specific bonus links to new product selling performance; however, new products are immediately included into the product portfolios of all sales teams, so they are part of the standard compensation plan, which includes incentives for exceeding quotas.

We collected data from two sources over two periods. In the first period, we used a survey to obtain salesperson data; specifically, we administered an Internet-based questionnaire to 289 salespeople in 32 sales teams. After two reminders (three-week

period), we received 211 surveys, for a 73% response rate. Consistent with prior studies (Barrick et al. 2007; Barsade et al. 2000), we included sales managers as team members, for two reasons. First, the managers in our sample are an integral part of the sales team and conduct both coordination and selling tasks to achieve individual sales targets. Second, our analysis aims to understand how the team context influences individual-level selling processes, so the exclusion of sales managers might bias our results. In the second period—six months after the questionnaire distribution—we also obtained each salesperson’s sales results from company records. This time lag enabled us to track the effect of team interactions on actual performance in selling newly introduced products.

4.4.2. Measurement

To develop the measures for our study, we began with a review of relevant literature and an exploratory qualitative grounding. We conducted in-depth interviews with sales managers, salespeople, and employees of the sales support staff to become familiar with the firm and its sales setting, as well as obtain commitment from the organization for this study. Next, we constructed a draft questionnaire and pretested it with six company employees and two industry experts. Following the pretests, we made minor wording adjustments to enhance applicability. From the results of the interviews, pretests, and industry-specific investigations (e.g., average product life cycle, average sales process duration), we defined new products as those introduced in the 12 months prior to the survey. Table 4-1 contains the scale items for the different measures. For most items, we relied on a five-point Likert scale with 1 = “very low” to 5 = “very high” as anchors.

Helping. The helping measure came from the helping scale of Podsakoff, Ahearne, and McKenzie (1997) and contained five items. We adjusted the wording to match the new product selling context. We followed suggestions from Chen, Mathieu, and Bliese (2005) and directly measured individual helping behaviors relative to the behaviors of other team members. That is, we focus on relative levels of helping.

Team identification. Following Van der Vegt, van der Vliert, and Oosterhof (2003), we used four items from Allen and Meyer's (1990) affective commitment scale to measure team identification.

Expected demand. We measured expected demand for the new product with a scale developed by Wieseke, Homburg, and Lee (2008). We adapted the items to match the new product selling setting, expanding the original scale by one item to cover the most important sales metrics (i.e., order intake, volume, revenue, profit) that have been used to assess beliefs about customer demand in the markets for new products.

Sales experience. We measured the sales experience of the sales team by asking about each salesperson's total years of relevant sales experience.

Sales performance for new products. The objective measure of new product sales performance reflected the actual revenue generated from the sale of new products by each salesperson. Consistent with previous research (Joshi et al. 2006; Wieseke et al. 2009), this measure is expressed as a percentage of individual revenue targets. Scores above 100 indicate that sales representatives exceeded their individual targets; scores below 100 indicate that they failed to achieve their targets. The sales targets (e.g., order intake, revenue growth) are set by senior management at the corporate level. To permit meaningful performance comparisons across all employees (company-wide), the focal company uses historical benchmarking to ensure that salespeople receive revenue goals of equal difficulty. The sales performance measure also assesses an individual salesperson's sales performance compared against historical benchmarks, calculated by taking into account the product types (e.g., type of ICT solutions, product complexity), sales territory characteristics (e.g., geographic scope, density), client characteristics (e.g., organizations in private versus public sectors, share of customers, strategic importance), and market characteristics (e.g., level of competition, market dynamism). To obtain a normal distribution, we transformed this objective measure of new product performance by its logarithm.

Table 4-1: Scale Items for Construct Measures

<i>Measures model 1</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>	<i>t-Value</i>
Helping (n = 5; CR = .89; AVE = .62)		
Within team Y, I am the one who...		
helps a team member if s/he falls behind in selling the new products.	.80	
shares his expertise about the new products with team members.	.65	9.71
“touches base” with other team members before initiating actions that might affect them in selling the new products.	.72	11.03
encourages other team members when they are behind in selling of the new products.	.86	13.91
willingly gives of my time to help team members who have problems with selling the new products.	.87	14.05
Team identification (n = 4; CR = .76; AVE = .52)		
I strongly identify with the other members of my team.	.68	
I would like to continue working with my team.	.61	7.42
I feel emotionally attached to this team.	.85	8.17
I dislike being a member of this team. [R] *	—	—
Expected demand (n = 4; CR = .89; AVE = .67)		
Please indicate your expectancies for new products during their introduction concerning...		
the size of the order intake.	.86	
the sales volume.	.84	15.47
the size of the revenue.	.91	17.14
the size of the profits.	.65	10.45
<hr/>		
<i>Measures model 2</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>	<i>t-Value</i>
Autonomy (n = 4; CR = .83; AVE = .56)		
I am allowed complete freedom in selling products.	.69	
I am allowed to sell products the way I think best.	.85	9.99
I am permitted to use my own judgment in selling products.	.76	9.41
I am allowed a high degree of initiative in selling products.	.68	8.64
Team-based reward (n = 3; CR = .83; AVE = .62)		
The pay scheme strongly motivates me to achieve team performance goals.	.84	
I am keenly aware how to maximize the team-based part in my payment.	.75	10.93
I am strongly motivated by the team-based pay scheme to be innovative and entrepreneurial.	.77	11.32
Long-term rewards (n = 3; CR = .85; AVE = .66)		
I am strongly motivated by the pay system to take a long-term orientation (e.g., revenue growth).	.82	
Our pay policies make it possible to achieve long-term (1 or more years) goals.	.89	13.18
Our pay policies make me keenly aware that long-term results (e.g., revenue growth) are more important than short-term results (e.g., order intake)	.72	10.91
Organizational identification (n = 6; CR = .88; AVE = .56)		
When someone criticizes ‘company X’, it feels like a personal insult.	.73	
I am very interested in what others think about ‘company X’.	.66	9.31
When I talk about ‘company X’, I usually say “we” rather than “they.”	.77	10.78
‘Company X’s’ successes are my successes.	.77	10.87
When someone praises ‘company X’, it feels like a personal compliment.	.90	12.53
If a story in the media criticized ‘company X’, I would feel embarrassed.	.61	8.60

* Scale validation testing resulted in the exclusion of this item.

Notes: n = number of scale items; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; [R] = reverse coded.

Controls. We included multiple controls to correct the model estimation. Consistent with previous research (Ahearne et al. 2010b; Fu 2009), we included

salesperson's age and tenure with the sales team as potential influences on new product selling performance. We also control for organizational identification, measured using Mael and Ashforth's (1992) six-item scale, which may account for a person's extra motivation to comply with a company team, and for autonomy, using De Jong, De Ruyter, and Lemmink's (2004) tolerance-for-self-management scale, which is an important general indicator of sales performance. We included autonomy's and age's nonlinear effects, in line with research that indicates an inverted U-shaped pattern effect of these characteristics on behavior (e.g., Tangirala and Ramanujam 2008) and sales performance (Joshi et al. 2006). Because team and long-term rewards also might drive behaviors and sales performance, we control for these variables, using relevant scales adapted from Wei and Atuahene-Gima (2009). Finally, the percentage of new products sold to new clients served as a customer portfolio-specific element, and percentage of the sales quota achieved controlled for salespersons' overall performance.

4.4.3. Measurement Validation

We analyzed the data in two consecutive stages. Because including more than five constructs would result in stringent demands for sample size (Hair et al. 2005), Bentler and Chou (1987) recommend analyzing submodels, as has been well established in marketing literature (Atuahene-Gima and Li 2002; Joshi 2010). We ran two separate measurement models, grouping related constructs. First, we explored the dimensionality and quality of our focal constructs: helping, team identification, and expected demand. We entered these items simultaneously in a principle components analysis. Four factors emerged, and all items loaded on the a priori defined scales (cross-loadings < .40). Similar results emerged when we analyzed the control measures—autonomy, team-based reward, long-term reward, and organizational identification. Second, we performed confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to assess the validity of the measures for the two groups mentioned. For the set of focal constructs, the model fit was excellent ($\chi^2 = 62.86$; d.f. = 51; $p = .1232$; normed fit index [NFI] = .97; nonnormed fit index [NNFI] = .99; comparative

fit index [CFI] = .99; standardized root mean square residual [SRMR] = .036; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .033). For the control measures, model fit was satisfactory ($\chi^2 = 150.15$; d.f. = 98; $p = .0005$; NFI = .94; NNFI = .97; CFI = .98; SRMR = .049; RMSEA = .050). We provide these results, including construct reliabilities and item-level factor loadings with t-values, in Table 4-1. This table also shows that the composite reliabilities varied between .76 and .89 (Nunnally and Bernstein 1994) and the variance extracted of each construct was greater than .50, in support of the measures' reliability and convergent validity. The measures also exhibited adequate discriminant validity; the variance extracted exceeded the average variance shared with any other study construct (see Tables 4-1 and 4-2). These results offer good confidence in our measures.

Table 4-2: Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations among Constructs^a

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1. % Sales quota achieved	-												
2. Ratio new products sold to new clients	-.035	-											
3. Age	.061	-.042	-										
4. Tenure with the sales team	.127	-.051	.274 ^{**}	-									
5. Autonomy	-.020	.007	.046	-.032	-								
6. Organizational identification	.086	-.068	.063	.194 ^{**}	.028	-							
7. Team-based rewards	.072	.128	.117	.006	.120	.058	-						
8. Long-term rewards	.040	.107	.075	.064	.136 [*]	.107	.544 ^{**}	-					
9. Sales experience	.084	-.082	.585 ^{**}	.227 ^{**}	-.032	.142 [*]	.042	.038	-				
10. Expected demand	-.003	.061	.002	.123	.104	.283 ^{**}	.152 [*]	.259 ^{**}	.046	-			
11. Team identification	.128	-.056	.067	.139 [*]	.029	.279 ^{**}	.256 ^{**}	.197 ^{**}	.132	.172 [*]	-		
12. Helping	.090	.137 [*]	.062	.201 ^{**}	.153 [*]	.306 ^{**}	.212 ^{**}	.141 [*]	.073	.226 ^{**}	.358 ^{**}	-	
13. Sales performance for new products	.319 ^{**}	.314 ^{**}	-.001	.073	.058	-.048	.057	.088	.025	.235 ^{**}	.045	.159 [*]	-
Mean	104.765	26.940	43.571	3.436	3.838	3.727	3.422	2.712	12.394	3.189	4.197	3.865	24.990
S.D.	39.354	28.486	6.786	2.764	.842	.768	1.019	1.064	6.635	.713	.693	.779	26.658

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

* $p < .05$ (2-tailed).

^an = 211 salespersons in N = 32 sales teams.

4.4.4. Operationalizing Diversity, Position, and Distance

Team diversity. Consistent with Harrison and Klein (2007), we operationalized team diversity in sales experience and expected demand with the standard deviation of each measure. Because the expected demand measure is a multi-item scale, we calculated the average value across items for each team member before determining the standard deviation across team members (Ahearne et al. 2010a; Pieterse et al. 2011). The diversity measure for sales experience ranged from 1.76 to 12.06, with a mean of 6.23 (SD = 2.37; skewness = .26; kurtosis = -.64). The diversity measure of expected demand ranged from .14 to 1.21, with a mean of .67 (SD = .24; skewness =

.60; kurtosis = -.29).

Individual position. We calculated each salesperson's individual position within the team, based on sales experience, expected demand, and sales performance, by taking the aggregate of the differences between an individual and all his or her team members, divided by the total number of team members,⁵ using the following formula:

$$\left[\frac{1}{n} \sum_{j=1}^n (S_i - S_j) \right], \quad (1)$$

where S_i expresses the value on an attribute for the focal salesperson i , S_j is the value for every other salesperson of team j , and n is the total number of respondents on the team. The resulting individual positions for sales experience ranged from -13.25 to 20.67 ($M = .00$; $SD = 6.13$; skewness = .65; kurtosis = .77), those for expected demand ranged from -2.03 to 1.76 ($M = .00$; $SD = .65$; skewness = -.22; kurtosis = -.69), and the positions for sales performance ranged from -1.68 to .74 ($M = -.22$; $SD = .52$; skewness = -.95; kurtosis = .37).

Distance measure. We operationalized the measure for individual distance in the team, based on sales performance, using the Euclidean distance (Van der Vegt et al. 2003). The resulting measure ranged from .01 to 1.59 ($M = .67$; $SD = .35$; skewness

⁵ We divided by the total number of individuals in the unit, including the person whose difference score is being calculated. Using n rather than $n - 1$ enables us to derive a metric that captures both the size and the positional effects. For example, one highly experienced salesperson (e.g., 10 years of experience) in a group with nine novice members (e.g., 0 years of experience) would have a relative position score of 9 (90/10). One highly experienced salesperson in a group with 99 novice members would have a relative position score of 9.9 (990/100). In both cases, the denominator is n . If we used $n - 1$, the difference score for the individual experienced member in both cases would be 1.00 (90/90 in the first case and 990/990 in the second case). We wanted a metric that could show that the experienced member in the second case is more different from others (99 novice members) than the experienced member in the first case (9 novice members).

= .45; kurtosis = -.39). For completeness, we present this calculation:

$$\left[\frac{1}{n} \sum_{j=1}^n (S_i - S_j)^2 \right]^{1/2} . \quad (2)$$

4.4.5. Analysis

Consistent with the multilevel nature of the data, we used multilevel regression analyses in MLwiN software (Rasbash et al. 2000). To test H₁–H₃ regarding the effects of team identification, team diversity, and individual position on helping, we used employee data and a hierarchical model with two levels. A three-step, nested approach served to assess the contribution of adding team identification and the interaction effects. In the first step, we estimated a model with all control variables and the direct effects of the antecedents related to team diversity and individual position (Model 1). Then we added team identification as a predictor of helping (Model 2). Finally, we included all two- and three-way interactions (Model 3). To mitigate multicollinearity, we standardized the variables first (Aiken and West 1991). The variance inflation factors (VIF) were all less than 2.4, confirming an absence of serious multicollinearity (Neter et al. 1996). The full model is expressed as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{HELP}_{ij} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{QUOTA}_{ij} + \beta_2 \text{RNC}_{ij} + \beta_3 \text{AGE}_{ij} + \beta_4 \text{AGE_SQ}_{ij} + \beta_5 \text{TENU}_{ij} + \\ & \beta_6 \text{AUT}_{ij} + \beta_7 \text{AUT_SQ}_{ij} + \beta_8 \text{OI}_{ij} + \beta_9 \text{TBR}_{ij} + \beta_{10} \text{LTR}_{ij} + \beta_{11} \text{IND_EXP}_{ij} + \\ & \beta_{12} \text{IND_ED}_{ij} + \beta_{13} \text{TEAM_EXP}_{ij} + \beta_{14} \text{TEAM_ED}_{ij} + \beta_{15} \text{TID}_{ij} + \beta_{16} (\text{IND_EXP}_{ij} \times \\ & \text{TID}_{ij}) + \beta_{17} \text{IND_ED}_{ij} \times \text{TID}_{ij} + \beta_{18} \text{IND_EXP}_{ij} \times \text{TEAM_EXP}_{ij} + \beta_{19} \text{IND_ED}_{ij} \times \text{TEAM_ED}_{ij} \\ & + \beta_{20} \text{TID}_{ij} \times \text{TEAM_EXP}_{ij} + \beta_{21} \text{TID}_{ij} \times \text{TEAM_ED}_{ij} + \beta_{22} \text{TID}_{ij} \times \text{IND_EXP}_{ij} \\ & + \beta_{23} \text{TID}_{ij} \times \text{IND_ED}_{ij} + \text{TEAM_ED}_{ij} + u_{0j} + \epsilon_{ij} , \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

where

HELP_{ij} = helping by salesperson *i* of team *j*,

QUOTA = percentage of the sales quota achieved,

RNC = ratio of new products sold to new clients,

AGE = age of salesperson,

AGE_SQ = age squared,

TENU = tenure with sales team,

AUT = autonomy,

AUT_SQ = autonomy squared,

OI = organizational identification,

TBR = team-based rewards,

LTR = long-term rewards,

IND_EXP = individual position with regard to sales experience,

IND_ED = individual position related to expected demand,

TEAM_EXP = team diversity in sales experience,

TEAM_ED = team diversity in expected demand,

TID = team identification,

β_{0j} = random coefficients that capture individual-specific unobserved heterogeneity within units,

$u_{0j} \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$ and denote unit-specific variances, and

β_{nj} = mean value for each team effect, accounting for team-specific variances (u_{0j}).

The model allows for within- and between-team effects (i.e., random-intercept regression model) and thus controls for the multilevel structure of the data (salespeople nested within sales teams) (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002).

We tested H_4 – H_5 using a multivariate hierarchical linear model with three levels. Level 1 refers to the dependent variables, indexed by $h = 1, \dots, m$; level 2 pertains to the sales representative, $i = 1, \dots, n_j$; and level 3 involves the sales teams, $j = 1, \dots, n$. Each assessment of an outcome variable for a certain salesperson thus is indicated by a specific line in the data matrix, containing the values $i, j, h, Y_{hij}, x_{1ij}$,

and all other predictors. To formulate the multivariate regression model as a hierarchical linear model, we used dummy variables d_1 to d_m to indicate the dependent variables (i.e., distance and individual position on sales performance). A dummy variable d_h equals 1 or 0, depending on whether the data line refers to the dependent variable Y_h or to another dependent variable. With these dummies, we can integrate the regression equations for the m dependent variables (i.e., 0 or 1) into one, three-level, hierarchical model:

$$Y_{hij} = \sum_{s=1}^m \beta_{0s} d_{shij} + \sum_{k=1}^p \sum_{s=1}^m \beta_{ks} d_{shij} x_{kij} + \sum_{s=1}^m u_{sj} d_{shij} + \sum_{s=1}^m e_{sj} d_{shij}. \quad (4)$$

All variables (including the constant) are multiplied by the dummy variables. In the sums over $s = 1, \dots, m$, only $s = h$ renders a contribution; all other terms are removed. If we simplify Equation 4, we thus obtain:

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{hij} = & \beta_{0h} + \beta_{1h} \text{QUOTA}_{ij} + \beta_{2h} \text{RNC}_{ij} + \beta_{3h} \text{AGE}_{ij} + \beta_{4h} \text{AGE_SQ}_{ij} + \\ & \beta_{5h} \text{TENU}_{ij} + \beta_{6h} \text{AUT}_{ij} + \beta_{7h} \text{AUT_SQ}_{ij} + \beta_{8h} \text{OI}_{ij} + \beta_{9h} \text{TBR}_{ij} + \beta_{10h} \text{LTR}_{ij} + \\ & \beta_{11h} \text{IND_EXP}_{ij} + \beta_{12h} \text{IND_ED}_{ij} + \beta_{13h} \text{TEAM_EXP}_j + \beta_{14h} \text{TEAM_ED}_j + \\ & \beta_{15h} \text{TID}_{ij} + \beta_{16h} \text{HELP}_{ij} + u_{0hj} + u_{11hj} + u_{12hj} + u_{13hj} + e_{hij}, \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

where Y_{ij} is the measurement of the h th variable for salesperson i of team j . The coefficients β_{mh} are random (unit-specific intercept and slope) and capture individual-specific unobserved heterogeneity within teams; u_{qhj} are $\sim N(0, \sigma^2)$ and denote team-specific variances. In addition, γ_{nhj} is the mean value for each team effect, to account for team-specific variances (u_{qhj}). For this model estimation, we again followed a nested approach with three steps. First, we specified the covariance terms among the individual-level (level 2) and team-level (level 3) variance components of distance and individual position on sales performance. Second, we included the control variables in the model. Third, we added the antecedent variables. The VIFs were all less than 1.6, so multicollinearity did not represent a

Table 4-3: Results for Antecedent–Helping Relationships

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Hyp.
	Helping		Helping		Helping		
	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE	
Intercept	2.500***	.288	2.740***	.289	2.810***	.275	
Control							
% quota achieved	.096	.121	.058	.118	.060	.114	
% new product sold to new clients	.345*	.168	.387**	.164	.566***	.161	
Age	-.005	.058	.006	.056	.006	.054	
Age ²	.070*	.035	.059*	.034	.089**	.035	
Tenure with sales team	.116*	.050	.104*	.049	.125**	.047	
Autonomy	.167**	.054	.160**	.053	.159**	.051	
Autonomy ²	.110**	.038	.096*	.037	.088**	.036	
Organization identification	.266***	.065	.216***	.065	.185**	.063	
Team-based rewards	.139**	.056	.100*	.056	.095*	.053	
Long-term rewards	-.026	.057	-.034	.056	-.052	.053	
Simple Effects							
Individual Position _{SALES_EXPERIENCE}	-.002	.057	-.022	.056	.037	.064	
Individual Position _{EXPECTED_DEMAND}	.079	.050	.070	.048	-.033	.054	
Team Diversity _{SALES_EXPERIENCE}	-.070	.048	-.058	.047	-.044	.046	
Team Diversity _{EXPECTED_DEMAND}	-.025	.048	-.026	.046	-.025	.046	
Team identification	—	—	.174***	.050	.138**	.052	H1
Within-Level Interaction							
Individual Position _{SALES_EXPERIENCE} X Team identification					.033	.061	
Individual Position _{EXPECTED_DEMAND} X Team identification					-.047	.050	
Cross-Level Interaction							
Individual Position _{SALES_EXPERIENCE} X Team Diversity _{SALES_EXPERIENCE}					-.019	.051	
Individual Position _{EXPECTED_DEMAND} X Team Diversity _{EXPECTED_DEMAND}					.166***	.047	
Team identification X Team Diversity _{SALES_EXPERIENCE}					-.070	.049	
Team identification X Team Diversity _{EXPECTED_DEMAND}					-.101*	.052	
Team ident. X Individual Position _{SALES_EXPERIENCE} X Team Diversity _{SALES_EXPERIENCE}					-.139**	.057	H2
Team ident. X Individual Position _{EXPECTED_DEMAND} X Team Diversity _{EXPECTED_DEMAND}					.021	.039	H3
Change in fit index	61.737*** (d.f. = 14)		11.672** (d.f. = 1)		23.547** (d.f. = 8)		
Explained variance	25.3%		29.5%		36.9%		

* $p < .05$.
 ** $p < .01$.
 *** $p < .001$.

Notes: We report unstandardized coefficients and use a one-tailed test for all variables in the model. We treated the slope coefficients as fixed because of the insignificant between-group variance. Salespeople: $n = 211$; Sales teams: $n = 32$. We checked the influence of mean levels of expected demand and sales experience to investigate possible confounding effects. Inclusion of the mean levels all hypothesized models did not significantly increase model fit (helping $\Delta\chi^2 = .139$; d.f. = 2), nor did it alter the estimated beta coefficients of the predictors. Finally, we checked the influence of sales managers within teams, who might help others more within their team (Barsade et al. 2000) and have a greater effect on group dynamics because of their hierarchical power (Wieseke, Homburg, and Lee 2008). Reestimations of the models excluding sales managers ($n = 180$) led to similar findings.

4.5. Results

4.5.1. Influence of Antecedents on Helping

In Table 4-3 we provide the results for H_1 – H_3 . In comparison with Model 1, Model 2 reveals a significantly better fit ($\Delta R^2 = .04$; $\chi^2_{d.f.} = 11.672$, $p < .001$), and Model 3 yields a significant improvement in model fit compared with Model 2 ($\Delta R^2 = .07$;

$\chi^2_{8d.f.} = 23.547, p < .01$.

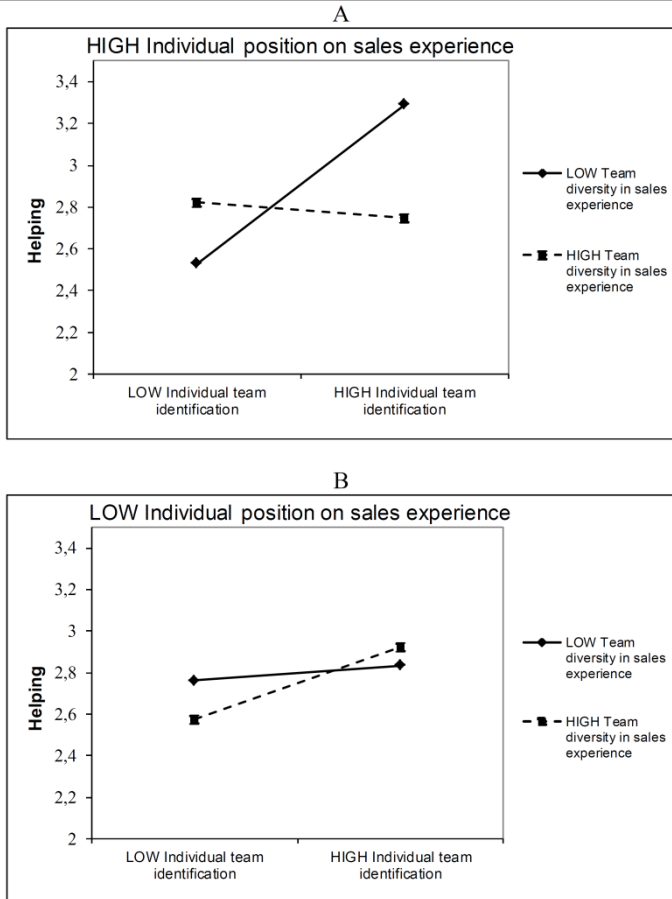


Figure 4-2: Three-Way Sales Experience Interaction of Team Identification, Team Diversity, and Individual Position on Helping

The Model 2 results further show that a salesperson’s team identification has a significant positive influence on helping ($\beta = .138, p < .01$), in support of H_1 . In addition, we find a significant three-way sales experience interaction effect among team identification, team diversity, and individual position on helping ($\beta = -.139, p < .01$), in support of H_2 . To interpret this three-way interaction, we also plotted the relationships (using one standard deviation above and one below the average for all

three factors involved). As we show in Figure 4-2, Panel A, the slope for the effect of a salesperson’s team identification on helping is positive if the salesperson has a high individual position on sales experience and operates in a team with less diverse sales experience. However, this slope is practically flat if that salesperson with a high individual position works in a team with diverse experience.

In contrast, in Figure 4-2, Panel B, the slope for the effect of team identification on helping becomes relatively flat when teams have little experience diversity and the salesperson’s individual position, based on sales experience, also is low. A positive slope instead emerges if salespersons with less sales experience work in teams with high experience diversity.

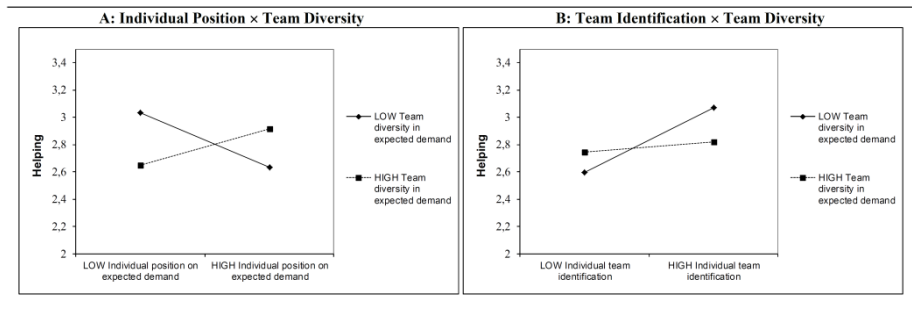


Figure 4-3: Expected Demand Interactions on Helping

We do not find a three-way expected demand interaction effect on helping when we consider team identification, team diversity, and individual position, in contrast with H₃. Instead, our results suggest an unhypothesized, positive interaction effect of salespersons’ individual position, based on expected demand, and team expected demand diversity on helping ($\beta = .166, p < .001$), as we depict in Figure 4-3, Panel A. Individual position in this case has a positive effect on helping if salespersons work in a team with high expected demand diversity but a negative effect if their teams have low diversity. In addition, we find a negative interaction effect of team diversity and team identification on helping ($\beta = -.10, p < .05$). Thus, when team diversity in expected demand for a new product is high, the positive effect of team identification on helping becomes significantly weaker (see Figure 4-3, Panel B).

Table 4-4: Results for Helping–Sales Performance Relationships

Variable	Model 1a		Model 1b		Model 2a		Model 2b	
	Individual distance on sales performance		Individual position on sales performance		H4 Individual distance on sales performance		H5 Individual position on sales performance	
	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE	γ	SE
Intercept ^a	.758***	.107	-1.011***	.189	.856***	.120	-1.353***	.221
Control								
% quota achieved	.007	.044	.441***	.079	.011	.044	.430***	.077
% new product sold to new clients	-.012	.055	.670***	.109	.002	.055	.622***	.108
Age	-.020	.018	.006	.036	-.020	.018	.002	.036
Age ²	.022*	.011	-.035	.022	.025*	.011	-.043*	.021
Tenure with sales team	-.034*	.016	.049	.034	-.031*	.016	.036	.033
Autonomy	.006	.017	-.017	.034	.012	.017	-.034	.034
Autonomy ²	.007	.012	-.045*	.025	.011	.012	-.057*	.025
Organization identification	-.041*	.022	.064	.043	-.032	.022	.037	.043
Team-based rewards	-.048**	.019	.088**	.036	-.044**	.019	.076*	.036
Long-term rewards	.000	.018	-.033	.036	-.002	.018	-.026	.036
Individual Position _{SALES_EXPERIENCE}	.029	.018	-.025	.037	.028	.017	-.019	.036
Individual Position _{EXPECTED_DEMAND}	.021	.015	.070*	.031	.023	.015	.060*	.031
Team Diversity _{SALES_EXPERIENCE}	-.077*	.043	.012*	.032	-.078*	.043	.020	.031
Team Diversity _{EXPECTED_DEMAND}	.047	.042	.029	.030	.046	.042	.033	.030
Team identification	-.001	.016	-.014	.033	.005	.017	-.037	.033
Simple Effects								
Helping					-.037*	.022	.126**	.045
Change in fit index	$\chi^2 = 111.988^{***}$ (d.f. = 32)				$\chi^2 = 7.881^*$ (d.f. = 2)			
Explained variance	26.6%		58.9%		28.9%		61.9%	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Notes: We report unstandardized coefficients and use a one-tailed test for all variables in the model. We treated all slope coefficients, except "% quota achieved," as fixed, because of the insignificant between-group variance. Salespeople: $n = 211$; Sales teams: $n = 32$. We also checked the influence of the mean levels of expected demand and sales experience to investigate possible confounding effects. Inclusion of the mean levels all hypothesized models did not significantly increase model fit ($\Delta\chi^2 = .718$; d.f. = 4), nor did it alter the estimated beta coefficients of the predictors. Finally, we checked the influence of sales managers within teams. Reestimations of the models excluding the sales managers ($n = 180$) led to similar findings.

Among the controls, the percentage of new product sold to new clients, tenure with sales team, organization identification, and team-based reward have positive linear effects on helping. The results also reveal a positive quadratic effect of age; autonomy has both positive linear and positive quadratic effects on helping.

4.5.2. Influence of Helping on Sales Performance

In Table 4 we summarize the results from the analyses of the helping–performance relationships. In comparison with Model 1, Model 2 again shows a significant improvement in fit ($\chi^2_{2d.f.} = 7.881$, $p < .05$). In addition, the results reveal a significant negative effect of helping on the individual salesperson’s distance from the team’s average sales performance for new products ($\beta = -.037$, $p < .05$) but a

positive effect on this salesperson's individual position ($\beta = .126, p < .01$). Thus we find support for both H₄ and H₅, respectively.

Both the percentage of the quota achieved and the percentage of new products sold to new clients control variables positively affect individual positions in relation to sales performance. These findings suggest that salespeople who achieve higher sales performance rates typically excel in both the sale of new products and in approaching new clients. In addition, we find a positive quadratic effect of age on the salesperson's distance from the team's sales performance but a negative quadratic effect on position in the team. The former quadratic effect suggests that older salespeople are more distant, in terms of their performance, from their colleagues. The latter effect instead means that older salespersons perform less well than colleagues, in line with previous research that indicates older salespeople are less effective (Fu 2009). Furthermore, we find a negative quadratic effect of autonomy on the relative performance of new product sales, in line with prior research that suggests an inverted U-shaped effect of autonomy for front-line employees on performance (Singh 1998). Organizational identification positively associates with the relative performance of new product sales, which empirically substantiates Wieseke and colleagues' (2009) suggestion that such identification facilitates salespeople's motivation to adopt and push new products. The use of team-based rewards significantly reduces an individual salesperson's distance from the average sales performance of the team and increases that person's position relative to colleagues, consistent with prior research (e.g., Sarin and Mahajan 2001).

Finally, team diversity with regard to sales experience reduces the distance from colleagues' sales performance. Individual position based on expected demand appears to have a positive effect on sales performance position for new products; people with high expectations thus appear better motivated to perform.

4.6. Discussion, Implications, and Further Research

The widespread use of functional sales teams makes it somewhat surprising that the impact of team composition on individual salesperson behaviors and performance

has not drawn more research attention or been investigated systematically in a sales context (Ahearne et al. 2010a). Particularly for the sale of new products—in which setting prosocial attitudes and behaviors seem imperative to overcome uncertainties about product features, customer demand, and appropriate sales approaches—empirical evidence regarding the added value of sales teams is scarce. To address this gap, we investigate how team diversity and a salesperson's individual position within the team jointly influence his or her prosocial attitudes and behaviors, as well as how it affects his or her own and others' performance.

First, our results reveal that an individual salesperson's team identification positively affects helping behaviors. Members who are more committed to their sales team are also more inclined to help their colleagues. This finding expands prior empirical work on the relationship between team identification and helping by confirming the relationship in a new product selling context (Janssen and Huang 2008; Van der Vegt et al. 2003).

Second, our results confirm the hypothesized three-way interaction effect of salesperson team identification, team diversity, and salesperson individual position in relation to sales experience. Specifically, salespeople who identify with the team and have greater sales experience are considerably more motivated to help colleagues when team diversity is low than when it is high. If team diversity in sales experience is low, a highly experienced salesperson enjoys a unique position: the only expert among a sea of less experienced colleagues. This experienced salesperson clearly feels normative pressure to help his or her colleagues. Conversely, when team diversity is high on this trait, such that subgroups of more experienced and less experienced salespersons form, experienced salespersons who identify with the team are less inclined to help. This finding empirically substantiates our notion that being part of an experienced subgroup reduces motivations to help, because the responsibility gets shared with other skilled colleagues and creates a sense of diffused responsibility.

Yet an opposite pattern emerges for salespersons with less sales experience

(Figure 4-2, Panel B). In this case, team identification offers a stronger motivation for helping when team diversity is high. Perhaps novices in less experience-diverse teams join the less experienced subgroup and perceive helping efforts as a means to differentiate themselves from their inexperienced colleagues, which should increase appreciation from experienced members.

Third, we hypothesized a three-way interaction of salesperson team identification, team diversity, and salesperson individual position in relation to expected demand, because team identifiers' inclination to help colleagues should be a joint function of these elements of expected demand. However, the results instead show only a positive two-way interaction effect of team diversity and individual position on helping, such that salespersons with higher demand expectations are more motivated to help colleagues when their team diversity is high rather than low (Figure 4-3, Panel A). In a team with diverse expectations about demand, the contrasting subgroups (low versus high expectations) prompt members of the high expectations subgroup to perceive a clear window of opportunity, so they persuade teammates of the other subgroup to sell new products. Backed by multiple colleagues with a similar optimistic view of the new product's potential, these experienced salespersons consider the effort to educate and convince pessimistic colleagues worthwhile.

Yet when the team diversity related to expected demand is low, the effect of the individual position on helping is not just weaker but even has a negative influence. Apparently, salespersons with high expectations are even less motivated to help others in these teams. Perhaps when the diversity of expected demand is low in a team, a salesperson with positive new product expectations feels alone. This sole optimistic salesperson likely feels isolated and regards helping colleagues as a risky effort that even might be counterproductive to his or her goals. As a result, this salesperson avoids debates about expectations by minimizing help to colleagues. On the contrary, a salesperson with low expectations in a homogenous team appears more motivated to help. If most of the team has more positive expectations about

selling a new product, a pessimist likely conforms with the others by allocating some effort to support them. Failing to do so creates the risk of being ostracized from the team if colleagues perceive this person as the sole pessimist on the team.

Finally, greater diversity about expected demand ostensibly lowers team identifiers' motivation to help colleagues. This finding confirms the view that more disagreement among team members about a new product's market potential discourages the team identifiers from putting forth effort to help teammates with the sale of these products.

A general observation of this study also pertains to the differential impact of sales experience and expected demand on the relationship between team identification and team diversity. Whereas sales experience–related diversity and the related individual position jointly exert a moderating impact on the relationship between team identification and helping, no such effect is found for expected demand–related diversity and the related individual position. We suggest an explanation based on the different nature of these attributes. Although sales experience is an enduring characteristic, expected demand constitutes a temporal, surface-level state. In a team setting, sales experience is strongly associated with a salesperson's status, position, and potential to contribute to team processes, as well as with his or her identification with the team and its goals, norms, and objectives (cf. Ehrhart and Naumann 2004). In contrast, expected demand is a task-related variable focused on outcomes and goals for just the new product. Salespeople with high expectations of demand may act as product champions, using the new product rather than the team as a point of reference (e.g., Garud and van de Ven 1992; Maidique 1980; Schön 1963). Their identification and relation with the social environment thus has less influence on their helping behavior than does the extent to which they and their colleagues identify with the new product and believe in its potential. Thus, we extend prior research that has focused on task-related behaviors by new product champions (e.g., Garud and van de Ven 1992; Maidique 1980; Schön 1963) by showing how new product believers behave socially in a team-based

environment.

Helping not only reduces performance distance but also leads to better new product selling performance for a salesperson compared with colleagues. The latter effect suggests that salespersons' allocation of time to helping colleagues makes them more effective in carrying out their own sales job—which substantiates the notion that salespersons who help are more effective, because their help is reciprocated (Van der Vegt et al. 2006). It also validates and generalizes empirical findings about classroom learning (e.g., Ploetzner et al. 1999) to a competitive business context.

4.6.1. Managerial Implications

Our study provides in-depth guidance for how to manage diversity within functional teams. We show that a person's willingness to help teammates typically depends on his or her individual position within the team and the team's diversity. Managers cannot consider just the level of team diversity when composing a sales team; they also must account for each salesperson's position in the team on attributes such as sales experience and expected demand.

In which team situation are individual salespersons with more sales experience and higher expectations of demand most motivated to help colleagues? Our results suggest that experienced, positively minded salespersons help in sales teams with (1) a low level of team diversity related to sales experience, such that they consist of one or a few experts, complemented by many less experienced colleagues and (2) a high level of team diversity pertaining to expected demand, such that they comprise two subgroups of members with high and low expectations for the market opportunities of the new products. That is, the number of experts should be few and prevent experience-based subgroups, but the team also must be large enough to support expectation-based subgroups to motivate the team to move on the market opportunity that exists.

However, not all managers have the liberty to compose the team they want. Restricted by the availability of human resources, they may have to deviate from

these suggestions. Therefore, we extend our advice: If multiple experts work in a team with several novices, the key objective is to prevent the development of two opposite camps. Managers might resort to a master–apprentice model in this case, linking to each expert to one or more novices. This option should prevent “fault lines” by clarifying team roles and individual responsibilities.

When confronted with lack of variation in expectations, the manager instead may need to stimulate intra-team helping by empowering the team and using team-based rewards (e.g., creativeness, innovativeness, and entrepreneurial activities). For example, instructions to be more creative could help compensate for the lack of debate that often characterizes homogeneous teams. Introducing competition with other teams also might motivate and stimulate team helping.

Finally, this study offers some interesting new tactics for managing individual sales performance in a team-based setting. Because our within-team measures of performance (i.e., individual position and distance) explicitly consider the team context, they are relatively less susceptible to measurement error. By using such within-team measurement instruments, managers can identify high performing salespersons more easily. The measurement instruments also directly link to and are relevant for business performance.

4.6.2. Limitations and Further Research

In designing our research, we made some choices that may be considered limitations. First, we conducted this study in one industry and used survey data and objective sales records from one company. Although this choice helped control for potentially confounding factors, it limits the generalizability of results. Replications in other industries and across companies would be helpful.

Second, previous research has demonstrated that helping explains performance better than other prosocial behaviors (Podsakoff et al. 2000); further research thus might examine specific aspects of helping, by focusing on information (e.g., exchange of expertise), motivation (e.g., encouraging colleagues), or coordination (e.g., touching base with teammates). For example, studies could explore how

internal and external brokerage of information (cf. Verbeke et al. 2011) influences new product selling performance. Because new product selling activities typically occur both within and outside organizations, salespeople's roles as boundary spanners may help determine new product teams' success. An interesting avenue for research would be to see how team composition in relation to these roles affects new product sales performance.

Third, we explicitly focused on the last stage of the new product development process—that is, the commercialization or sale of the new products. However, we invite researchers to expand our conceptual model to include salespeople's involvement in prior stages of the new product development process, to examine diversity in information. Researchers could investigate how sales team members' involvement in new product ideation or development stages influences their prosocial behaviors during commercialization.

Fourth, in addition to other dimensions of diversity and prosocial behavior, other types of teams can be researched, such as multifunctional account teams. The dynamics in these teams may differ from those in the functional teams we studied. For example, they might vary more along several dimensions but generally have clearer team goals and rewards.

Chapter 5: *Conclusions, Implications, and Future Research Directions*

In this final chapter we present a summary of our main findings as well as their implications for managers and academics. Key findings from this research are: (i) employees are able to sell new and existing products simultaneously—however this depends on the sales setting and the appropriate use of frontline mechanisms, (ii) organizational and team identification are important determinants of sales performance behaviors, and (iii) team composition has an important impact on salespersons' pro-social behaviors and sales performance. These results are discussed and integrated in a broader picture. We end with directions for future research.

5.1. Synopsis

Although both scholars and practitioners acknowledge the importance of the sales function to effectively commercialize new products in the market place, little empirical research has been conducted on this matter.

To extend our knowledge this dissertation has focused on individual sales persons' motivations, behaviors, and performance regarding the sale of new products and how they are influenced by the wider task and social context at different levels throughout the organization including organizational goals, values, and norms, managerial directives, and peer behavior. Based on the systematic review of literature in Chapter 1 (i) the potential trade-offs between the sale of new and established products and (ii) the impact of teams on individual salesperson performance were identified as important research directions. The aim of the dissertation was to: *investigate in how far salesperson's new product selling behaviors and performance are influenced by the a) task-related and b) social-related context in which the sale of new products takes place*. Three empirical studies were conducted and presented in separate chapters.

In Chapter 2, the focus was on the role of sales manager and how it directs salespersons' proactive behaviors towards the sale of new and/or existing products. In Chapter 3, we examined the role of managers in applying autonomy and feedback as mechanisms to stimulate salesperson new and existing product performance. Finally, in Chapter 4, we examine the helping behavior and performance of salespersons organized in sales teams, accounting for team diversity. While Chapters 2 and 4 involve studies conducted in industrial setting, the study in Chapter 3 was conducted in a retail setting. In the current chapter, we will provide a general overview of the findings. First, in section 5.2, we report the main conclusions of the chapters with respect to the specific objectives that were stated in the introduction. Secondly, based on our findings we present in 5.3 an integral perspective on salesperson performance for the sale of new products, which the commonalities of

the individual studies. We conclude this chapter and this dissertation by offering recommendations for future research.

5.2. Main Conclusions of the Chapters

5.2.1. Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, we focused on the role of sales managers' modal selling orientations and how they direct sales behaviors of subordinates. More specifically, we aimed to: 1) *examine the deleterious impacts of sales managers' modal orientations towards either new or existing products on salespersons' proactive selling behaviors of the neglected products type* and 2) *understand the mechanisms that attenuate the deleterious effects caused by modal orientations*. We showed that a modal orientation has detrimental effects on the proactive selling of the neglected product type. This detrimental effect can be countered if managers adopt an ambidextrous orientation or if salespersons have a high organizational identification (OI). Furthermore, we revealed that proactive selling for new (existing) products has a positive impact on sales performance for new (existing) products, but negatively impacts the sale of existing (new) products. Finally, the findings of the study suggest that salespeople can switch between the two selling activities without experiencing any interference or switching costs.

5.2.2. Chapter 3

Chapter 3 discussed conditions under which the concurrent sale of new and existing products would hinder and promote overall profit obtainment. The objectives of chapter 3 are to: 1) *examine whether an ambidextrous selling orientation facilitates or hinders the sales performance of new and existing products respectively, and how it impacts net profit obtainment*, 2) *to examine whether task autonomy mediates the relationship between sales manager orientation and salesperson selling performance*, and 3) *to determine whether the effect of task autonomy on sales performance for new and existing products is contingent on manager performance*

feedback and salesperson age.

The study showed that the effect of a manager's dual selling orientation on sales performance for both new and existing product can be effectively channeled through task autonomy as front-line mechanism. The results show that ambidextrous sales managers outperform their singular-minded counterparts if they properly utilize the frontline mechanisms. More specifically, ambidextrous managers tend to promote high levels of net profit obtainment by their personnel if they grant their sales employees task autonomy and give little performance feedback. In addition, a remarkable finding is that more aged sales agents tend to outperform their younger counterparts when working under an ambidextrous manager.

5.2.3. Chapter 4

Chapter 4 addressed the impact of team composition. Specifically, the objectives of this chapter were to examine: 1) *how team diversity and individual position within the team jointly affect the pro-social attitude–behavior relationship for team members* and 2) *the impact of helping on both individual sales performance relative to teammates' performance (i.e., individual position on sales performance), as well as on sales performance measured as a distance from colleagues.*

Consistent with our hypothesis we found that the combination of team diversity and individual position determines an individual's helping behaviors. However, the results revealed that while team composition in terms of sales experience moderates the team identification-helping relationship, team composition in terms of expected customer demand directly impacts helping behavior. Furthermore, the results indicated that experienced members are most likely to help out peers in low diverse teams—i.e., when they are the only experienced member. In contrast, salespersons with high expected demand are most likely to help colleagues in diverse teams—i.e., when they are joined by one or more 'new product believers. Finally, our results revealed the importance of helping behaviors during the sale of new products by showing that it not only benefits colleague members' performance (by decreasing

performance distances) but also that of the helper him or herself.

5.3. An Integrated Perspective

By means of mediation models we investigated how the task context (selling new versus established products) and organizational context (e.g., management, team composition, and social identification) drive a salesperson's motivation, behaviors, and new product selling outcomes. The results of our three empirical studies share a number of commonalities being i) possibilities for combining the sale of new and existing products, ii) the role of managers as facilitators of ambidexterity, and iii) the role of social identification, which are discussed next.

5.3.1 Combining the Sale of New and Existing Products

One essential issue is whether the sale of new and existing products should be carried out by one individual salesperson or divided between different persons. Countering claims from certain scholars, we find that sales representatives can effectively combine both selling tasks. Moreover, we found empirical support for this in two different research settings: The information communication technology (ICT) industry (B2B) and the consumer electronics context (B2C, retail).

The ICT industry is a highly competitive and dynamic sector where technical sellers are the main source of information for their business customers before, during, and after the sale of product solutions. Their main challenge is to effectively operate in a dynamic and complex selling environment, dealing with diversified product portfolios, demanding managers and customers, and intricate team-based structures. Intuitively one may argue that given the complexity of the sales process and the differences between new and existing product selling in terms of risks it is better to separate both selling activities. However, our study in Chapter 2 shows that salespeople are able to combine both activities without experiencing switching or interference costs. Possibly the teams where sales persons in operate plays an important role, particularly for successful selling the new products. While existing

products involve routine selling activities new product selling is non-routine, involving much uncertainty. Being part of a team offers the individual the chance to discuss “unique selling points” of the new product and sales strategies. Moreover, team members may jointly develop or comment on each others’ presentations and share experiences. This may facilitate coping with this more challenging part of the ambidextrous task. Further research may be required to explore these conjectures.

Results of Chapter 3 showed that sales representatives operating in a retail setting can also effectively deal with simultaneously selling new and existing product products and the inherent trade-offs involved. The retail environment is, however, a setting that is characterized by a rapidly changing product portfolio, highly informed customers, relatively straightforward sales processes, but low use of sales teams. Therefore, compared to the B2B setting of Chapter 3, trade-offs are more rooted in goal conflict than in differences between both selling activities per se. While downstream players such as manufacturers put emphasis on the sale of new products, retailers also need to sell existing products to prevent ‘aging’ stocks and depreciation costs. Although salespersons find it difficult to concurrently sell both new and existing products, our results clearly demonstrate that salespersons combining both activities outperform their singular-oriented counterparts also in retail store context. It suggests that the proposed ambidextrous approach outperforms one relying on existing and new product specialists. Future research could focus on the generalizability of this claim across retail settings for different products and services.

In sum, this dissertation counters previous claims that new product selling activities be separated from existing product selling activities. Moreover, our study indicates that salespeople that effectively and efficiently combine the sale of new and existing products are better performers.

5.3.2 The Role of Managers as Facilitators of Ambidexterity

Our findings show that managers are key in overcoming potential trade-offs between

the sale of new and existing products, making subordinate aware off and motivating them to take responsibility for both tasks (cf. Mom et al. 2009). By providing salespeople with the necessary task autonomy they can resolve potentially conflicting sub-goals, accomplishing overarching goals such as overall net profit obtainment in an effective and efficient manner. Indeed, managers play a key role in “building a set of processes or systems that enable and encourage individuals to make their own judgments about how to divide their time between conflicting demands for [exploitation and exploration]” (Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004, p. 210). This signifies that balancing multiple task responsibilities needs to be facilitated by a supportive context that aids ambidexterity at the frontline. This extends prior work on top management’s role in focusing the attention of their subordinates in general (e.g., Hambrick and Mason 1984). It also extends the ambidexterity literature (e.g., Mom et al. 2009) by showing proof for positive outcomes of managerial ambidexterity at the frontline.

Frontline employees can only sell new and existing products simultaneously when the manager has created the ‘right’ environment and sensitivity to relevant problems. It suggests that the manager plays a pivotal role in implementing firm-level ambidexterity at the operational level. Here, the differential focus and activities are more difficult to handle and generally require guidance but also some level of empowerment (Marinova et al. 2008). The manager ‘transfers’ the inherent contradictions within overall strategic objectives into clear operational directives for its subordinates. Studying how this guidance works, which may be combined with different leadership styles and empowerment, is a good topic for future research. We anticipate that excellent managers are able to combine ambidexterity in their coaching with simultaneous empowering, particularly of more experienced and committed actors. This brings us to our next topic: the effect of organizational identification.

5.3.3 The Role of Identification

An important theme throughout this dissertation involves two different foci of identification: individual salesperson's team identification and organizational identification. We have examined the effects of organizational identification (OI) and team identification on proactive selling behaviors for new products, proactive behaviors for existing products, and helping behaviors. Consistent with previous research in the social identification literature (Riketta and Dick 2005), the results clearly confirm the relevance of distinguishing between these two types of identification in a sales setting. OI and team identification have significant but differential effects on salesperson performance behaviors and performance outcomes.

Scholars argue that in organizational settings teams are more important in forming individual's identity and consequently work-related attitudes, behaviors, and performance—given that teams are more exclusive, concrete and proximal—than higher order entities such as the organization (Ashforth et al. 2008). Yet, this dissertation shows that while team identification associates with pro-social behavior between sales agents, OI associates with task-related behavior and adds to new product selling in a more 'strategic' manner. Consistent with this we find that team identification is important for helping and organizational identification is important for proactive selling. Our findings indicate that OI can substitute for manager's selling orientations on salesperson proactive selling behaviors. Identifying with organizational goals, norms, and values makes a salesperson more aware of and motivates him or her to pursue strategic goals that include both the sale of new and existing products. Team identification is critical to stimulate fruitful cooperation: Team identifiers help each other more and receive help in return, which improves the success of their new product selling. Team composition plays an important role. For example, our findings demonstrate that a highly experienced team identifier is more willing to help peers when he or she is the only experienced member within the team. This dissertation shows that social identities clearly interact with a

salesperson's context, being either the manager or the team.

Often considered 'lone wolves' within their organizations, salespeople require much organizational and team identification to perform well during the sale of new products. Operating autonomously and spending much time outside their organizations this dissertation demonstrates that social identifications safeguard organizational goals, by intrinsically motivating salespeople to behave in a manner consistent with its interests (van Knippenberg and Sleebos 2006). Acting on behalf of the organization becomes congruent with serving personal goals (Hughes and Ahearne 2010). Social identities are especially important during uncertain and challenging tasks such as the sale of new products as it provides individual salespersons support and reduces uncertainty.

5.3.4 Set of Normative Principles

Based on the results of this dissertation and the above discussion, a set of normative principles can be developed for managers. More specifically, we suggest that in order to design a sales force that fosters the sale of both new and existing products, managers should apply the following principles:

- 1. Create a sales force led by sales managers who understand the value of selling both the new and existing products in a product portfolio of a firm.*

Companies can accomplish this in several ways. For example, sales managers can receive special training on how to combine the sale of new and existing products. It may begin with a discussion of the importance of both types of products for firm survival and the underlying mechanisms. Next, the best approaches for selling each may be defined. Finally, managers may be challenged to look for possible synergies between both processes, particularly looking for commonalities at higher levels of abstraction. Based on insights developed the managers may be better able to coach staff to perform ambidextrous sales tasks. In addition, sales managers can be involved more in the strategy development of companies, thereby making them

more aware of the value of the company's complete product portfolio (i.e., new and established products). Another solution is to recruit ambidextrous managers that have a proven track record in hosting contradictions, multitasking, and continuously refining and renewing their knowledge, skills, and expertise. People who "have been there, and done that" may be better able to explain and also convince others to act in an ambidextrous way for selling new and existing products.

2. *Complement sales manager efforts with the installation of a well-designed frontline mechanism, considering task autonomy, team composition, salesperson traits, and outcome feedback.*

The directive and motivating efforts of a sales manager will be most effective when the work setting is well aligned with the manager's efforts. For example, sales managers should understand that they have to direct their older and experienced salesperson to the concurrent sale of new and established products. However, to do so effectively managers should complement effort by granting high task autonomy and restricting their outcome feedback. This ensures that these salespeople stay motivated and successfully utilize their extended knowledge base. In contrast, more novice salespeople should be directed towards the more difficult and non-routine task of sale of new products. For novices mastering the selling of existing products is hard and may take too much time and attention away from selling new products. By drawing attention to this task some balance is accomplished and the learning process towards a more complete sales person activated. In doing so, sales managers should closely monitor the novices' selling activities (i.e., low task autonomy) and provide them with sufficient outcome feedback. Finally, also team composition deserves careful attention. By composing a well-balanced team i.e., one with a few (but not too many) experienced members, the experienced salesperson will take the responsibility to help the novices by showing them how to be more effective on the job. This reduces the role of the sales manager, who then can pay more attention to strategic matters and optimizing the sales force.

3. *Foster internal marketing efforts for new products within the sales force by focusing on teams with a substantial proportion of salespersons with high demand expectations*

Focusing on teams with relatively high demand expectations will enable marketing managers to acquire support for a new product more easily. In sales meetings, marketing managers should emphasize new product attributes and features that meet customer needs, which will foster salespeople's demand expectations. As long as the new product features and attributes link directly to the customer needs defined by the sales department, salespeople can understand these connections and confidently make stable, positive sales predictions. After gaining experience selling new products, the 'optimistic' teams, may be used to persuade the more 'pessimistic' teams to sell the new product too. Using this approach using lead selling teams with high expectation can help overcome possible inertia regarding the sale of new products that sometimes exists in a sales force. It concerns an important task for the marketing manager together with the sales manager.

4. *Create a mindset where salespeople not only focus on individual performance, but also on team and organizational performance.*

A profession where the mindset mainly focuses on individual competence and performance is difficult to change, but norms where team work is valued and promoted can be fostered and norm congruent behavior can be rewarded separately to stimulate its adoption. Consistent with this several suggestions can be made. First, a role model of 'the successful and helpful sales person' may be created and cultivated (i.e., in terms of embracing serious sales targets *and* 'citizenship' performance). The main objective is that the role model values and promotes prosocial behaviors to successfully sell new and existing products. Second, reward and control systems should be aligned; they should express company values and stimulate the desired norms and behaviors. Finally, an extra organizational

identification program may be started. It may be integrated with regular sales force trainings and motivation building sessions. The organization should best be presented as close to and important for sales team identity. This is important because high organizational identifiers value the short and long term goals of the organization they try to sell both types of products automatically.

5.4. Directions of Future Research

Directions for additional research were provided at the end of each chapter and in the previous section. In this final section we would like to indicate some general directions for future research on new product selling.

5.4.1 Serving Old and New Customers

Two studies in this dissertation explicitly focused on how the sale of new products influenced the sale of established products and vice versa. However, another interesting avenue for research is to examine when and how sales representatives can balance their time between old and new customers (Zablah et al. 2012). Salespeople that service both existing and new customers often have to make the trade-off between continuing to focus on an existing customer account to meet quota or to nurture a new customer who has a slightly different need (Gibson and Birkinshaw 2004). In such sales settings the burden for salespeople is likely to increase even further when tasked with the sale of a new product, since salespeople must find the time to serve new and old customers and the time to sell and service new and old products.

5.4.2 Extending Research on Prosocial Behaviors

In this dissertation we focused on intra-team helping behaviors during the sale of new products. To assess the level of helping we used a one-dimensional construct. Instead of using such a general construct, some recent studies have proposed to consider different dimensions of helping such as (1) intra-team versus intra-organizational helping (Riketta and Dick 2005), or (2) altruistically motivated

helping versus self-serving helping (e.g., impression management) (Belschak and Den Hartog 2010), and (3) helping colleagues versus helping customers (George 1991; George and Bettenhausen 1990). These different foci can give additional insights, such as the underlying rationale for helping behaviors and its relationship with a salesperson's own performance and that of colleagues. For instance, helping colleagues from other sales teams or departments exposes the salesperson to a more diverse set of selling practices, information, and expertise which may benefit his or her own sales performance. However, the associated costs of helping may also be higher as these practices may not be easily translated to one's own selling situation. Finally, salespeople can help customers better understand the value of the new product, a task which is especially important in business to business setting (Fu et al. 2010). As a consequence, customers may therefore experience a better fit between new product features and their needs increasing satisfaction and loyalty towards the selling organization. In addition, salespeople may become more knowledgeable about customer needs during the sale of new products (cf. Homburg et al. 2009).

In sum, helping may have different foci each with different benefits and costs for the salesperson, organization, and customers. Additional research is necessary to distinguish between these different foci of helping and determine its influence on new product selling performance.

5.4.3. Outsourcing New Product Selling

Whether new product selling activities should be performed in-house or outsourced to independent contractors is an upcoming phenomenon. The global outsourcing market grew from a total worth of \$232 billion in 2000 to an amount of \$443 billion in 2008 (Newton-Taylor 2010). One activity that firms may decide to outsource is (part of) the sale of new products to manufacturer's reps or selling agents. Outsourcing the sales function to independent sales agents may be especially interesting for small high-tech based firms. These companies can save time and money it would otherwise have to invest in recruiting and training an in-house sales

force. Especially when the product is radically different from existing products in the market it may be beneficial to outsource this to external parties such as selling agents. These parties may already have extensive knowledge about product features or customers. Yet, the main disadvantage is that these selling agents often represent different product lines or firms, so being unable to allocate 100% of their time to the sale of this new product. Future research should investigate under which conditions outsourcing the sale of new products would be beneficial for companies. For instance, it is possible that new to the market products could be outsourced more easily than new to the firm products. However, it also could be the other way around. In addition, research should answer the question how managers can capture manufacturer's reps or selling agents 'share of mind' (cf. Hughes and Ahearne 2010)—namely that these external sales persons act in the best interest of their company. Finally, it would be worthwhile to investigate which steps of the sales process can be outsourced and which steps should be managed internally. For instance, the selling agent may be used to hunt for new customers while the company itself will focus on retaining these customers.

5.4.4. The Role of Social Media

Finally, we also recommend future studies on the role of social media. Social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and Linked-In make it easier for people to explore and share information. Salespeople for instance can use these platforms to search for new customer needs. In addition, salespeople can use it to connect to existing and potential customers in order to make them aware of upcoming product launches. Especially when selling new products it is important to share information about product features, value propositions, and customer needs, but also about how to implement a new product, deal with start-up problems, and its fit with other offerings. However, research has hardly touched upon these potential uses of social media.

In conclusion, for some salespersons, new products are everything. Others debunk the value of new products and rather stick with the sale of established products. Whatever the motives, firms should promote the sale of both new and existing products to prosper in the market place. Important vehicles for doing so are the sales manager and the sales team as they enable individual salespeople to cope with the dynamic and uncertain work environment. This dissertation shows that salespersons, if facilitated by a supportive context, are a powerful factor in bringing new products successfully to market.

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Appendix: Relation between Team Diversity and Individual Position

The basic operationalization for team diversity (i.e., within-unit diversity) for attributes that relate to values, beliefs, or attitudes is the standard deviation (SD) within teams (Harrison and Klein 2007). Figure A1 is a graphic illustration of the range of diversity. The theoretical maximal value for SD occurs with an extreme bipolar distribution within teams: Half the members score high (point h), whereas the other half scores low (point l). The SD equals $(u - l)/2$ under conditions of maximum diversity. For example, variable D uses a five-point scale, from 1 = low to 5 = high, so its maximum diversity would be 2. For (absolute) minimum diversity (or perfect agreement), the relative position within the team is 0, which can happen anywhere on the continuum.

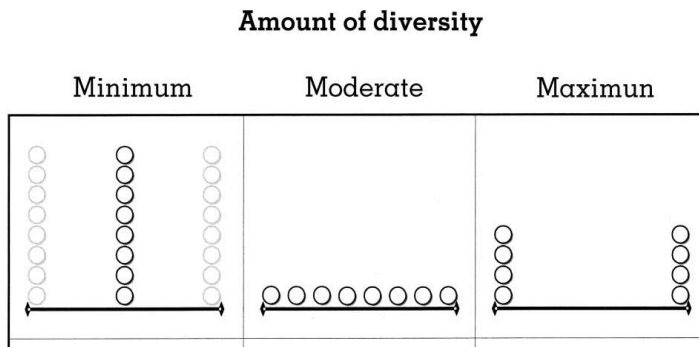


Figure A1: Graphic illustration of within-unit diversity (Harrison and Klein 2007)

Diversity and individual position within the team do not necessarily correlate. A team member could have very high experience, even in a homogenous group with little experience overall. Consequently, it is important to understand the conditions of maximum and minimum diversity in which an individual member attains maximum distance in his or her individual position. In theory, four combinations are

possible (see Figure A2).

Number theory indicates that with maximum diversity, the team is split in two equal groups. All individuals within the team have maximal deviation from the ideal team member (group average), such that half the team scores low and the other half scores high. We can easily determine the theoretical maximal and minimal individual position of members within diverse teams by calculating $[(u - 1)/2]$ and $[(1 - u)/2]$, respectively.

With absolute low diversity (perfect agreement), the individual position of all team members equals 0. We are interested in a situation in which maximum deviation of an individual position occurs under the lowest possible diversity, so we look at the instance in which an individual is a positive or negative outlier in a relatively homogenous team. A high level of homogeneity (low diversity), in combination with maximum relative distance, can occur in two cases: Everybody on the team scores (low) high, but one scores low (high). The theoretical minimum and maximum values for relative positions are $[(n - 1)(u - 1)/n]$ and $[(n - 1)(1 - u)/n]$, respectively. With high diversity, individuals who score high (low) are part of a subgroup, whereas with low diversity, these individuals are alone.

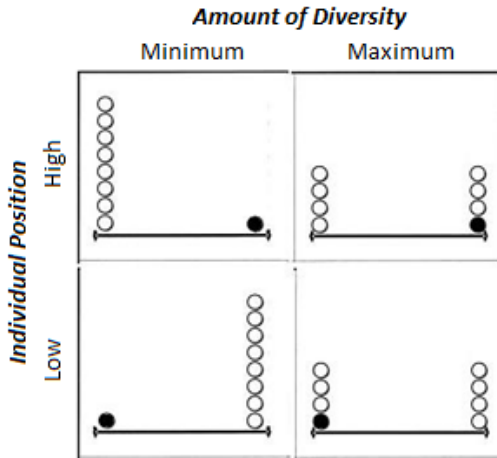


Figure A2: Graphical representation of possible configurations between diversity and individual position.

Summary

As we proceed into the 21st century, companies are facing increasingly complex and dynamic business environments. Many organizations have to deal with intense competition as more products are introduced faster, with shorter life cycles, and less competitive differentiation. Consequently, companies are pushed to not only be more adept in product development but also in capitalizing on these innovative activities. However, while companies have become more successful in inventing and developing new products, they still need to step up their efficacy in capitalizing on these activities. Recent studies show that especially the sales force is crucial factor to successfully commercialize new products. Yet, given its relevance, it is surprising to see that an in-depth understanding of the role of the sales force during new product commercialization still is lacking.

Based on a systematic review of the literature in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, the following research gaps have been identified: (i) the potential trade-offs between the sale of new and established products (i.e., task context) and (ii) the impact of teams (i.e. social- context) on individual performance. Therefore, aim of this dissertation is to investigate in how far salesperson's new product selling behaviors and performance are influenced by the a) task context and b) social context in which the sale of new products takes place.

Three empirical studies were conducted and the results are presented in separate chapters. In Chapter 2, the focus is on the role of the sales manager and how he/she directs salespersons' proactive behaviors towards the sale of new and existing products. In Chapter 3, considers the role of sales managers in regulating autonomy and providing feedback as mechanisms to stimulate salesperson new and existing product sales performance. Finally, Chapter 4 involves a study on the impact of helping behavior on performance of salespersons organized in sales teams, taking a team diversity perspective. While Chapters 2 and 4 involve studies conducted in industrial setting, the study in Chapter 3 is conducted in a retail context. As such,

this dissertation considers the intersections between sales, team, and NPD literatures and offers novel insights for both academics and practitioners.

The empirical study in Chapter 2 investigates the consequences of a sales manager's modal orientation toward either new or existing products on salespeople's proactive selling behaviors of the other product type. Dealing with complex products and customer relationships paradoxes at the front line may occur in terms of resource allocation and task execution when selling new and existing products. However, the possible deleterious influence of sales managers' modal selling orientation (selling new or existing products) on salespersons' proactive selling behaviors for the neglected product type have not yet been considered. Finding sales manager ambidexterity (i.e., a sales manager's dual orientation toward both new and existing products) and salesperson organizational identification to be mechanisms that buffer this effect, this chapter also identifies boundary conditions of the myopia caused by sales managers' modal orientations. The results further reveal an interesting interplay between these mechanisms showing that the buffering effect of manager ambidextrous orientation depends on the level of salesperson organizational identification. In turn, the two-part empirical study in Chapter 2 links salespeople's proactive selling behaviors toward new and existing products to their commensurate forms of objective performance and shows that combining these selling behaviors does not impair performance. The results of Chapter 2 contribute to the literatures on managerial orientations, proactive selling, and organizational identification.

The empirical study in Chapter 3 studies the effect of managerial selling orientation on salesperson performance in a retail context. When manufacturers introduce a new product to the market, downstream retail partners are faced with inherent trade-offs. Retail sales personnel needs to support the new product's introduction with substantial sales efforts, but also sell the existing products in stock, before storage and devaluation costs spin out of control. This chapter shows how retail sales managers can guide sales personnel's performance of new and existing

product selling, respectively. It is argued that a manager may have a selling orientation that prioritizes selling new products, existing products, or both (i.e., an ambidextrous selling orientation). Furthermore, managers align their selling orientations with a frontline management mechanism consisting of task autonomy, performance feedback, and employee age. Based on data gathered from sales representatives and company databases of a large European consumer electronics retailer, a time-lagged partial least squares analysis is conducted to empirically test the conceptual model. The findings demonstrate that ambidextrous sales managers outperform their singular-minded counterparts if they properly utilize the frontline mechanisms. More specifically, ambidextrous managers tend to promote high levels of net profit obtainment by their personnel if they grant their sales employees task autonomy and give little performance feedback. In addition, a remarkable finding is that more aged sales agents tend to outperform their younger counterparts when working under an ambidextrous manager. In this respect, the study contributes to the literature by combining the literatures on ambidexterity, sales research, and work-design.

The empirical study in Chapter 4 examines the role of sales teams during the sale of new products. In the modern era of team-based product selling, companies must foster intra-team helping behaviors by individual salespeople driven by individual goals. This chapter shows an analysis of how team composition, in terms of diversity and members' positions within the sales team, affect each salesperson's prosocial attitudes and behaviors, as well as his or her new product selling performance. Using survey and time-lagged archival data from 211 salespeople in 32 sales teams, the study results show strong support for a combined impact of team diversity and individual position on willingness to help colleagues. Contrasting effects arise for team composition with regard to sales experience and expected demand: To benefit from experienced members, team diversity should be low, whereas to benefit from salespeople's high expected demand for the new product, team diversity should be high. Finally, the findings reveal that team members who

help peers most diminish the performance differences among team members and succeed better in selling new products than their less helpful counterparts. Overall, the main contribution of this study is to combine the individual-level and team-level foci of research prevalent in research on new product selling and team research, respectively.

Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the main findings of the three empirical studies and shows how they contribute to answering the research question. Subsequently, an integrated perspective is given showing commonalities between the separate chapters. First, this dissertation shows that the sales force can and should combine the sale of new and established products. Although companies may consider it more effective to separate the selling of new and established products, this dissertation shows that combining both selling activities is not only possible but also leads to superior performance. Second, key to the facilitation of ambidexterity at the frontline are sales managers. Sales managers have the power to design an environment where subordinates can flourish in several ways. Yet, installing a wrongly designed frontline mechanism may have serious detrimental effects for both individual and organizational performance. Third, this dissertation shows that the role of identification cannot be neglected at the front line. Identifying with the team and the wider organization motivates salespeople to take on their task-related role and their social-related role. Social identities are particularly important during uncertain and challenging tasks such as the sale of new products as it provides salespeople support and reduces uncertainty.

The results of this dissertation inform managers about the challenges that their subordinates encounter when selling new products and provides guidelines to deal with these challenges. First, managers should stimulate the concurrent sale of new and existing products. In particular older salespeople are adept to do so because they can deal more effectively with higher levels of autonomy and uncertainty. Second, managers should be aware of the importance of organizational goals, values, and norms. Promoting them among subordinates and showing how they match with

subordinates' personal goals, values, and norms creates self-managing sales representatives who take more balanced decisions that are in the best interest of the company. Moreover, it permits managers to devote their time to more important functions such as planning, strategy development, and training. Third, managers should acknowledge and carefully manage team composition as it determines 'who helps who' within the team. When selling new products, it is better to have one relatively experienced salesperson within the team. Being the only experienced salesperson this person will feel responsible for the other team members' performance and help them out with the sale of new products. In addition, to promote helping in the team, managers should ensure that new product believers are backed up by one or more new product believers.

In sum, in today's selling environment, salespeople are increasingly faced with trade-offs and paradoxes that can no longer be dealt with individually. As a consequence, salespeople have to become (i) more proactive in their selling task and (ii) also become more involved in prosocial activities with their colleagues. Managers are key in facilitating these two roles. This dissertation aimed to provide deeper insight into the new product selling proficiency of individual salespeople, and consequently bridges and extends theory regarding sales, teams, and NPD.

About the author

Michel van der Borgh was born in Muntendam, the Netherlands, on April 10, 1981. After gaining his Bachelor degree in Mechanical Engineering at the Hanze University in Groningen, he studied Innovation Management at the Eindhoven University of Technology, the Netherlands. In 2007 he was the first student to graduate 'Cum Laude' within the program based on a study on Business Ecosystems conducted at the High Tech Campus Eindhoven. From 2007 till 2012 he worked at his PhD project at the Eindhoven University of Technology of which the results are presented in this dissertation. His work has been published in R&D Management and numerous conference proceedings. In addition, work based on this dissertation has been nominated by EMAC for Best Paper based on a Doctoral Dissertation. He has held a lecturer position at Tilburg University from August 2011 till September 2012. From September 2012 onwards, he is working as assistant professor of Innovation, Technology Entrepreneurship & Marketing, at the Eindhoven University of Technology.