MASTER

Factors influencing salesperson's selling efforts on green products
motivations, abilities, and opportunities

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Factors influencing salesperson's selling efforts on green products: Motivations, Abilities, and Opportunities

Master Thesis

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Abstract

Purpose - Empirically investigate the effect of motivations, abilities, and opportunities (i.e. MOA) on a salesperson's decision to put more effort into selling green products compared to grey products.

Methodology - A survey was conducted among Dutch and Flemish salespersons who sell both full electric cars (i.e. green products) as conventional cars (i.e. grey products) in an B2C context. In total, 95 useful responses were obtained which were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS .

Findings - This research shows that salespersons who are committed and experienced in selling green products are more inclined to direct effort toward selling those green products compared to grey products. In addition, salesperson's level of environmental consciousness is positively related with the level of effort into preparing sales (e.g. amount of time spent to answer customer questions and the amount of contacts with the customer) but not with effort into closing the deal (i.e. measured as the number of offers placed for green products compared to grey products). On the other hand, salespersons with greater usage experience allocate more effort to close the deal but not to sales preparation. Finally, the positive effect of supplier's support on salespersons decision to put more effort in green product sales preparation is marginally and has even no effect on the level of effort directed towards closing the deal. Moreover, supplier's support does not moderate the relationships of salesperson's motivation and ability on effort.

Practical Implications - Findings of this research indicate that it is essential for sales managers to recruit and retain salespersons with many years of green product sales experience. In addition, we suggest green product suppliers to offer green demo products to increase the level of salesperson's green product usage experience.

Research limitations - We conducted this exploratory research on one type of high involvement green products in a B2C context which results in limiting the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, the results and conclusions should be interpreted with caution since our conceptual model was tested using a relative small sample size (n=95). Additionally, self-reported sales measures were used and hence common method bias might be present.

Keywords - Green product selling, MOA model, commitment, environmental consciousness, green product usage experience, green product sales experience, support.

Management summary

Introduction

Products marketed as environmentally friendly are at the moment widely integrated in firms product portfolio, ranging from consumer goods, technologies, and services (Delafrooz & Goli, 2015). Those products and services, offered by retailers, give consumers the possibility to buy a greener alternative to existing, less environmentally products (Jansson, 2011; Chamorro, Rubio, & Miranda, 2009). More specifically, green products, also called environmentally products or eco-innovations are often innovative and have less harmful impacts on the environment (e.g. eco-friendly detergents, sustainable financial services and alternative fuel vehicles) than conventional so called 'grey' products (Jansson, 2011).

Although green products are often innovative products, green and new products differ in certain respects (Jansson, 2011). For example, green products are often characterized by instrumental drawbacks such as high purchase prices combined with less convenience. Furthermore, the adoption of green products is influenced by environmental attributes, governmental incentives, and policies (Steinhilber, Wells, & Thankappan, 2013; Noppers, Keizer, Bolderdijk, & Steg, 2014). In other words, selling green products seems to be even more challenging compared to other products. Furthermore, scholars in green marketing demonstrate that salespersons often resist to promote green products because of their lack of knowledge and confidence, latent demand, time-constrained sales interactions, and limited (governmental) incentives (Moon et al.'s, 2016; Tsarenko et al., 2013; Barbarossa & Pastore, 2015; Matthews, Lynes, Riemer, Del Matto, & Cloet, 2017).

Conceptual model

We used the motivation-opportunity-ability (MOA) framework (Figure 1) as a theoretical structure to identify factors that affect the allocation of effort to green products compared to grey products (Sabnis, Chatterjee, Grewal, & Lilien, 2013). We have chosen the MOA framework since it has been proven effectively in explaining salesperson's new product selling and cross-selling behavior (Fu, Richards, & Jones, 2009; Schmitz, 2013). Moreover, since this framework incorporates contextual mechanisms (i.e. opportunities), variables beyond salespersons control could be examined.
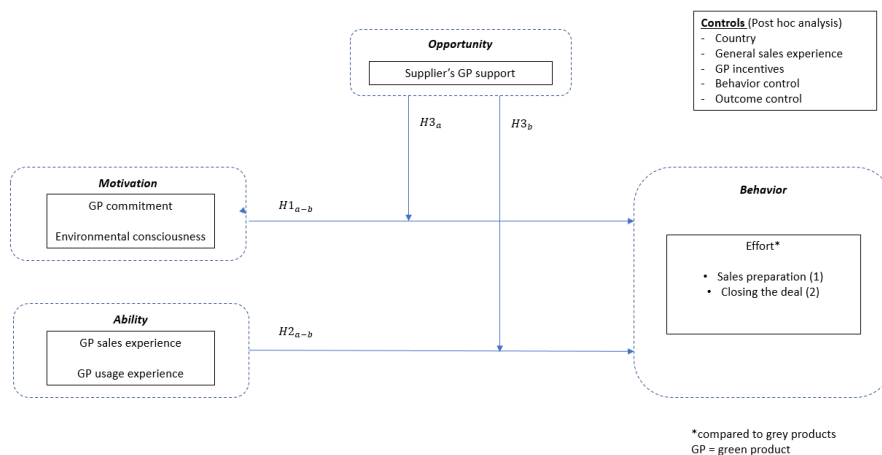

Figure 0-1: Conceptual model

We selected the key variables related to the MOA framework by reviewing existing literature on green marketing (Chapter 2). First, given the instrumental drawbacks and the latent demand for green products, we expect that salesperson's green product commitment affects salesperson's decision to put effort into selling those products. Second, since the adoption of green products are driven by environmental attributes, we presume that environmental conscious salespersons are more inclined to sell those products. Additionally, scholars in green marketing demonstrate that salesperson's lack of abilities (i.e. knowledge and confidence) might hinder salespersons to promote green products. Therefore, we expect that salespersons with higher levels of green product sales experience and usage experience are more willing to put effort in selling those products. Finally, in line with Allcott & Sweeney's (2017) assumption that salespeople are not able to address consumers' unawareness of green products because they receive limited resources and work in time-constrained sales interactions, we suggest that supplier's green product support moderates the relationship between salesperson's motivation/ability and effort.

Methodology

A survey was conducted to investigate the extent to which salesperson's motivation, opportunity and ability influence salesperson's decision to put more effort in selling green products compared to grey products. Salespersons who work at mono- and multi-brand franchised dealerships located in The Netherlands and Belgium were invited to participate. Self-reported measures for all concepts were used, including effort. Hence, in attempting to overcome the common method bias, some remedies were adopted such as separating the measurement of the predictor and dependent variables in the survey. After all surveys were collected, the data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

Results & Discussions

In total, 111 salespeople participated, which yielded 95 useful surveys after excluding missing cases and cases with outliers. The results show that, with the selected antecedents, the conceptual model is able to predict 32% of the variance in sales preparation and 28% variance in closing the deal. Four out of six hypotheses are (partially) supported (Figure 2).

In the post hoc analysis, we took controls into considerations and tested for other moderating effects. First, we included the control variables; country, general sales experience, and green product incentives. We found that Dutch salespersons seem to put less effort into green product sales preparation compared to Belgian salespersons. Additionally, after we included the control variables, not all confirmed hypothesis of the initial model are still confirmed. To be more precise, $H1_a(1)$ and $H1_b(1)$ (i.e. commitment and environmental consciousness) are no longer supported but marginally supported. On the other hand, $H2_a(1)$ (i.e. green product sales experience) is still supported. Moreover, all confirmed hypotheses with closing the deal as dependent variable are still supported.

Second, to test whether the relationships between salesperson's motivation and abilities on effort are influenced by opportunities from the retailer (i.e. sales manager), outcome - , behavioral control and green product incentives moderating effects were examined. Only one moderating effect has been found significant. More specifically, the relationship between green product sales experience and effort is moderated by the level of outcome control such that a higher level of outcome control weakens the relationship between green product sales experience and effort toward closing the deal.
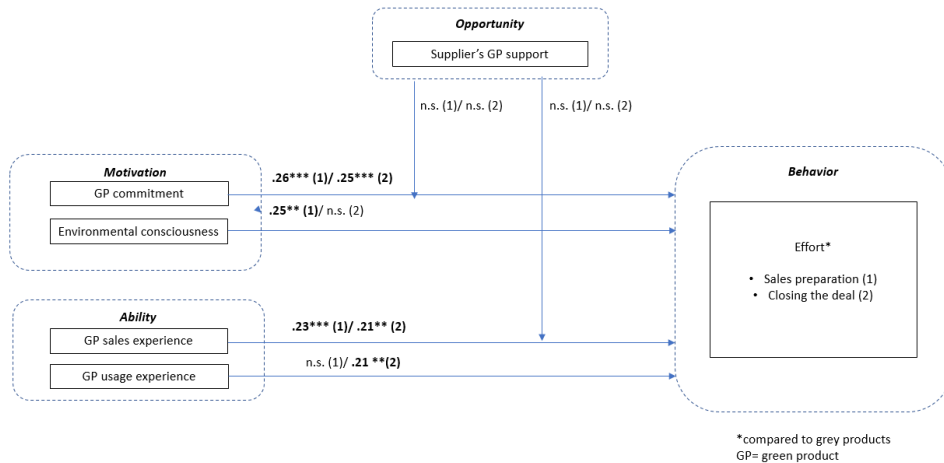
Figure 0-2: Conceptual model with tested Hypotheses (controls not included)

Implications

This research is the first to empirically investigate the influence of MOA antecedents on a salesperson's decision to direct more effort toward selling green products compared to grey products. It therefore deepens the understanding of the green and new product selling process, and provides valuable theoretical insights.

The current research adds to existing literature in green marketing. First, our findings are in line with Tsarenko et al. (2013), Allcott & Sweeney (2017), and Matthews et al. (2017) assumptions that salesperson's lack of attitudes and abilities hinders salespersons from promoting green products. Moreover, although many scholars in green marketing investigated the role of environmental consciousness on green consumer behavior (e.g. Johnstone & Tan, 2015; Jansson, 2011; Barbarossa & Pastore, 2015), no scholars have investigated the impact of salesperson's level of environmental consciousness on green selling behavior and consumer's purchase intention.

The current research adds to existing literature in new product selling. Although green products are often eco-innovations, no scholars in new product selling have examined highly innovative green product sales practices. Since green products – in contrast to new products- do not often completely replace existing (i.e. grey) products, the effect of salesperson's sales experience solely regarding the green product (i.e. not in general) could be examined. Additionally, as far as we know, we are the first who investigated the influence of salesperson's green product usage experience on a salesperson's effort toward selling (green) products.

Considering the practical implications, first, we suggest sales managers to recruit and retain salespersons with many years of green product sales experience. More specifically, our study found that salespersons with greater green product sales experience are more inclined to put effort into selling green products in comparison to grey products. Consequently, we suggest managers to implement salesperson's green product sales experience in their recruitment processes. Considering the fact that many competitors are at the moment for the first time developing green products besides grey products, we advise managers to direct extra effort to retain salespeople with high levels of green product sales experience. Second, we suggest green product suppliers to offer green demo products to increase the level of salesperson's green product usage experience and hence increase salesperson's green product offers compared to grey product offers. Moreover, considering that most salespersons have low usage experiences with green products, it is important that suppliers make the green products appealing to use.

Preface

This master thesis is the final project for the master Innovation Management at the Eindhoven University of Technology and consists of two distinct parts.

The first part includes a literature review on green marketing and new product selling in order to theoretically understand the research problem. While reviewing articles on green marketing it became apparent that despite the demonstrable importance of personal selling on green consumer behavior, salespersons seem to put few efforts in selling those products. Furthermore, in contrast to new product selling literature, scholars in green marketing have paid little attention to salesperson's green product selling practices.

The second part (i.e. the current report), implements the general descriptive findings of the first part. This part was conducted at a car supplier, in particular in a product marketing department. This department is responsible for the internal marketing through providing information about new launched cars (e.g. technical features and consumer prices), changes in existing products (e.g. prices and accessories), and information about competitors' products toward the franchised car dealerships. The car supplier found that many salespeople put few efforts in selling full electric vehicles compared to conventional vehicles. In other words, the supplier wants to get a better insight which factors affects salesperson's decision to put more effort into selling electric vehicles. Therefore, we decide to empirically investigate antecedents (i.e. motivations, abilities, and opportunities) on salesperson's green product selling effort.

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Secondly, I would like to thank my company supervisor for his support during my project. You provided me with sufficient information and data to start the project. Furthermore, the weekly meetings helped me to keep on track and to make sure my master thesis project was also of added value to the company. In addition, I would also like to thank all salespersons for their generous participation.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends. My parents and friends believed in me and constantly supported me throughout my 3 years here at the Eindhoven University of Technology. Without them, finalizing my master thesis project would have been much harder.

Valentien Steverlynck

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List of abbreviations

AVE	Average variance extracted
B2B	Business to business
B2C	Business to consumer
BEV	Battery electric vehicle
CFA	Confirmatory factor analysis
CR	Composite reliability
EFA	Exploratory factor analysis
FCV	Fuel-cell vehicle
FEV	Full electric vehicle
HEV	Hybrid electric vehicle
ICE	Internal combustion engine
IPMA	Importance – performance map analysis
M	Mean
MOA	Motivation – opportunity – ability
PHEV	Plug-in hybrid electric vehicle
PLS-SEM	Partial least squares structural equation modeling
SD	Standard deviation
VIF	Variance inflation factor

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1 Introduction

This first chapter contains an introduction on the business context of the study, the problem indication and statement, the research questions and the research method that will be applied. In addition, an explanation is given on the theoretical and practical relevance of this master thesis study. Finally, this first chapter contains a description of the structure that is maintained throughout this report.

1.1 Business context

This research is conducted at a car supplier which is responsible for import and marketing activities within the Benelux. In the distribution channel, the car supplier serves as an intermediary between the car manufacturer and the independent dealers. In other words, the car flows from the car manufacturer through the supplier to its dealer networks where it is retailed to customers. The dealers then support these customers with warranty, service, repair, and other services.

The company is divided in different departments such as (corporate) sales, sales planning, finance, marketing and communication, product marketing, public relations, and aftersales support. The department for which this research is conducted – product marketing- is responsible for the internal marketing. In other words, the product marketing department provides information toward the independent dealers about for example new launched cars (e.g. technical features and consumer prices), changes in existing products (e.g. prices and accessories), and competitors' products.

1.2 Problem indication

For decades the automotive industry has relied on the internal combustion engine (ICE) but with environmental regulations and increasing concerns regarding the emission of greenhouse gases, alternatives to the ICE vehicle have been proposed, including: the hybrid electric vehicle (HEV), the plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV), the battery-electric (BEV) or full-electric vehicle (FEV) and the fuel-cell vehicle (FCV) (Dijk, Wells, & Kemp, 2016). The first alternatives to pure ICE powertrains, the HEV's, and PHEV's have gained a significant market share in the last decade (Dijk et al., 2016). But recently, also signs of a shift toward fully electrified powertrains are becoming apparent (MCKinsey & Company, 2014). For example, Europe's new registrations of FEV have been growing since 2010 from 891 vehicles toward 55495 vehicles in 2016 (EAFO, 2017). However, the trajectory and ultimate scale of adoption of full electric vehicles in Europe remains uncertain (Dijk et al., 2016).

1.3   Problem statement and research question

The transition from conventional also called 'grey' products (i.e. ICE powertrain vehicles) to 'green' products (i.e. full electric vehicles) is an enormous challenge both for the carmaker, the car supplier and the independent car dealership. In addition, especially salespersons play obviously a crucial role in this transition since almost all new cars are sold through personal selling at dealerships (Richtel, 2015). However, bad retail experiences associated with the purchase of full electric vehicles have been reported to the car supplier. To be more specific, the car supplier sent trained mystery shoppers into the dealerships to observe salesperson's sales approach towards the full electric vehicles. In general salespersons seem to put few effort in selling full electric vehicles compared to conventional vehicles. For example, mystery shoppers were frequently not offered spontaneously a test drive and often even got not the chance to test drive the FEV because the salesperson had failed to charge it. Moreover and even more surprisingly, if the mystery shopper made an appointment beforehand, 18% of them could still not take a test drive. Furthermore, findings indicate that salespersons often lack knowledge on electric vehicles and consumer incentives. Finally, salespersons did often not perform follow-up calls or attempt to close the deal. Based on these mystery shopping findings, the following problem statement is formulated;

Salespersons at car dealerships often put less effort in selling full electric vehicles compared to gasoline powered vehicles.

The present study wants to find a solution on the above stated problem by answering the following main research question;

Which factors influence salesperson's decision to put a larger amount of effort into selling green products compared to grey products?

In order to answer this main research question, a set of sub-questions is formulated. The following sub-questions will be examined by reviewing existing literature in green marketing;

- *How are green products defined?*
- *Are there differences between selling green products and new products?*
- *Why do salespeople often resist to promote green products?*

1.4 Research method and approach

This master thesis project concerns an explorative research in which a quantitative collection method is applied (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2011). The research outline can be explained in three steps. The first step consists of reviewing existing literature on green marketing and new product selling. Especially literature on the role of the salesperson in selling green and new products were examined. Subsequently, these insights were used to develop a conceptual model to get a better insight of factors which affect salesperson's allocation of effort toward green products compared to grey products.

The second step refers to the data collection. An online questionnaire was developed, whereby a part was sent by mail and the other part handed out personally at the dealerships. More specifically, the online surveys were directed to salespersons who sell both green (i.e. electric vehicles) and non-green products (i.e. conventional vehicles) in mono- and multi-franchised dealerships located in The Netherlands and Belgium (Flemish speaking part). The constructs were measured on an individual level, not on a team-level, since the salesperson has to sell the green products (and grey products) individually. Moreover, because the predictor variables and the dependent variables are obtained from the same source and rater, we adopted some remedies in attempting to overcome the common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

The third step refers to the investigation of the conceptual model. Partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied. This research method was chosen since it is powerful in cases where the research involves small sample sizes and does not make assumption about the distribution of the data (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2013).

1.5 Theoretical and practical relevance

Despite the demonstrable importance of personal selling on green consumer behavior, salespersons seem to be reluctant to promote green products (Tsarenko, Ferraro, Sands, & McLeod, 2013; Fuentes, 2014; Matthews et al., 2017). Furthermore, surprisingly and in contrast to new product selling literature, scholars in green marketing have paid little attention to sales force green product selling practices. To our knowledge, the literature stream "green product selling" in green marketing does not exists. In green marketing literature, only a few scholars investigated the influence of salesperson's abilities and attitudes (e.g. salesperson's enthusiasm, self-efficacy, knowledge and in-store communication) on green product sales (e.g. Tsarenko et al., 2013; Barbarossa & Pastore, 2015; Matthews et al., 2017). These abilities and attitudes were ranked by customers (or mystery shoppers) on their willingness to purchase the green product. As far as we know, no scholars in the green marketing stream collected quantitative data from salespersons or sales managers to gain a better understanding in their green product selling practices and performances.

Although green products are often innovative products and hence called eco-innovations, as far as we know, no scholars in new product selling have examined eco-innovations (i.e. highly innovative green products) sales practices. However, we found that new and green products differ in certain respects (Jansson, 2011). For example, green products are often characterized by instrumental drawbacks such as high purchase prices combined with less convenience (Noppers, Keizer, Bolderdijk, & Steg, 2014). Furthermore, the adoption of green products is influenced by environmental attributes and governmental incentives and policies (Steinhilber, Wells, & Thankappan, 2013; Noppers, et al., 2014).

In other words, we can conclude that selling green products is even more challenging compared to other products.

Concluding, investigating under which conditions salespersons are more likely to put effort into selling green products compared to grey products seems relevant both for green marketing and new product selling literature.

Regarding the practical relevance of this study; this master thesis study provides green product suppliers and retailers a better insight into salesperson's green product selling practices. Additionally, this research demonstrates which factors influences salesperson's decision to put a larger amount of effort into selling green products compared to grey products. Managers can use these insights to foster green product sales. For example, sales managers can adapt their recruitment process in order to select salespersons who are more likely to direct their efforts into green product sales.

1.6   Report structure

The remainder of this report covers 5 chapters. Chapter 2 provides a recap on the theoretical findings from the literature review on green marketing. The chapter gives answers on the aforementioned sub questions. The third chapter consists of the conceptual framework and the associated hypothesis. Fourth, an explanation is provided of the methodology that was used to conduct this research. Furthermore, this chapter contains an explanation of the main constructs that were measured. Chapter 5 describes the analysis of the data and discusses the results. Finally, the last chapter contains conclusions and limitations with possible further research directions. An overview of the report's structure can be found in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: Overview of the report's structure

Thesis structure	*Chapter*
Background and problem definition	1
Theoretical analysis	2,3,4
Practical Analysis	5
Conclusions and recommendations	6

2   Theoretical background

In this chapter, we will elaborate on existing academic literature that supports this research. More specifically, we decided to take a closer look on green marketing literature in order to investigate the three aforementioned sub-questions namely;

- *How are green products defined?*
- *Are there differences between selling green products and new products?*
- *Why do salespeople often resist to promote green products?*

The literature stream green marketing came into prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The term green marketing was defined in 1975 by the American Marketing Association (AMA) as "the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe" (Laheri, Dangi, & Vohra, 2014; Joshi & Rahman, 2015). Nowadays, AMA defines green marketing through three aspects: "the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe" (retailing), "the development and marketing of products designed to minimize negative effects on the physical environment or to improve its quality" (social marketing) and "the efforts by organizations to produce, promote, package, and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns" (environments) (AMA, 2017).
In this study we are especially interested in the "retailing" aspect of green marketing. In other words; "the marketing of products that are presumed to be environmentally safe". Surprisingly this aspect of green marketing has not been thoroughly investigated.

2.1   Green product definition

Many definitions and characteristics of green products exists in green marketing literature. Initially, green marketing focused on specific physical products but gradually the focus has broadened to services such as tourism and financial services (Laheri et al., 2014).

According to Dangelico & Pontrandolfo (2010) green products can be classified on the basis of three dimensions; main life cycle stage (production, use, and disposal), the environmental focus (energy, materials/resources, pollution/toxic waste), and the type of environmental impact (less negative, null and positive). Therefore, a product can be considered as a "green product", in terms of one or more of the three types of life cycle stages and environmental focus, if it has an environmental impact lower than conventional products, or if it has a null impact, or if it positively contributes to reducing environmental impact of other products. This classification, highlights the multiple features of 'greenness' and results in high levels of diversification of green products and practices. For example, many green products and practices with a focus on energy in the consumer goods sector can be identified. In the 'before usage' phase, companies develop practices to make production processes more energy efficient ('less negative' impact), use renewable energy sources ('null' impact) and reuse waste energy in terms of heat or gas ('positive' impact). In the 'usage' phase, companies produce products such as intelligent systems with sensors for energy efficiency, efficient tires with low rolling resistance, hybrid engines ('less negative' impact), biofuels, natural ventilation, solar thermal panels for hot water heating ('null' impact), and roofing materials for solar cells ('positive' impact). In the

'after usage' phase, products are developed that can be disassembled or directly used to generate energy at the end of their lifecycle, such as vehicles or tires, are also seen as green products.

According to (Stern & Ander, 2008) the following words can be used to describe a green product namely; organic, natural, local or locally sourced, sustainable, ethically sourced (linked to fair trade), environmentally-friendly, nontoxic materials, carbon offset (the product's negative impact has been offset with credits).

2.2   Differences between selling green- and new products

Although green products, are often innovative products and hence called eco-innovations, green and new products differ in certain respect (Jansson, 2011). The differences between the two products are elaborated in more detail below.

- **Green products are often not substitutes but complements of grey products.**

In contrast to new products which commonly replace existing products in the short to mid-long term, green products, in general, do not substitute less environmentally friendly products. For example, fair trade products, organic foods, electric cars, alternative energy sources have not yet completely replaced grey alternatives. In other words, salespeople should concurrently pursue the sale of grey and green products at the same time in the coming future. Previous research found that pursuing dual goals regarding new and existing products (i.e. adopt ambidextrous-product selling strategies) in the frontline is difficult (Leslie & Holloway, 2006; Dickie & Trailer, 2016 ; van der Borgh, de Jong, & Nijssen, 2017) Moreover, recent studies in green marketing demonstrate that salespersons preferentially sell grey products above green products (Matthews et al., 2017; Allcott & Sweeney, 2017).

- **Green products have often instrumental drawbacks (e.g. high prices and less convenience).**

Instrumental attributes reflect the functional (positive or negative) outcomes of owing and using a green product (Noppers et al., 2014). In contrast to new products, green products typically possess less favorable instrumental attributes compared to existing (i.e. grey) products, which (may) inhibit their adoption. For example, electric cars' main instrumental drawbacks are the high purchase price and the limited range. Many studies demonstrated that the adoption of a green product indeed primarily depends on its perceived instrumental qualities, and hence inhibits the adoption of those products (e.g. Egbue & Long, 2012, Morton, Anable, & Nelson, 2016). However, some studies (e.g. Heffner, Kurani, & Turrentine, 2007; Noppers et al., 2014) found that instrumental attributes are less important for adopting green products than has been assumed.

- **The adoption of green products is driven by environmental attributes.**

Environmental attributes reflect the (positive and negative) outcomes of the ownership and use of the product for the environment (Noppers et al., 2014). Green products have obviously a less negative environmental impact than the grey product they are supposed to replace (Noppers et al., 2014). Scholars indicated that environmental attributes promote the adoption of green products. For example, individuals who pay more attention to environmental values appeared to be more willing to adopt green products (e.g. Jansson, 2011; Egbue & Long, 2012; Moons & De Pelsmacker, 2015). On the other hand, some studies indicate that environmental consciousness does not materialize into actual green product purchasing behavior (i.e., the so-called green attitude - behavior gap; Johnstone & Tan, 2015; Barbarossa & Pastore, 2015). Moreover, the instrumental drawbacks decrease the positive impact of the environmental attributes on green product adoption.

During the 1990s consumer's concern about the environment increased and companies took for granted that "green would sell" and responded by rapidly adjusting their promotional campaigns resulting in green-washing strategies, i.e. claiming that their products are far more environmentally friendly than they actually are (Peattie & Crane, 2005; Budinsky & Bryant, 2013). To rebuild public trust, nowadays companies must inform the public about the true environmental impact of the green product (Bonini & Oppenheim, 2008). However problems remain. For example, many firms have chosen not to make any green claims at all for risk of alienating customers (Peattie & Crane, 2005).

- **The adoption of green products is driven by governmental support.**

Government is a key factor in pushing the development and diffusion of green products. Governments must therefore find the right mix of regulatory pressure and funding options corresponding to the current condition of its national industries and markets, to make green products attractive for both the supply and demand side (Steinhilber, Wells, & Thankappan, 2013).

Although many governments have supported their industries to produce green products and have employed a number of policies to achieve environmental objectives, studies indicate (e.g. Zhang, Xie, Rao, & Liang, 2014; Steinhilber et al., 2013) that even more policies, financial incentives (i.e. R&D and consumer incentives), infrastructure investments (e.g. charging poles), should be made by governments to promote green product adoption.

2.3   Salespersons' resistance to promote green products

Many scholars in green marketing investigated consumer's green intention - behavior gap, i.e. environmentally conscious consumers who resist to adopt green consumption behavior. Much of these scholars suggest that the intention-behavior gap is driven by intrinsic factors such as demographics and psychographics (e.g. D'Souza, Taghian, & Khosla, 2007; Popp, 2011). However, some scholars have investigated the impact of salesperson's selling practices on consumers' environmental consumption behavior (e.g Moon et al.'s, 2016; Tsarenko et al., 2013; Barbarossa & Pastore, 2015; Matthews, Lynes, Riemer, Del Matto, & Cloet, 2017). These studies demonstrate the importance of personal selling on green consumption behavior but also indicate that salespersons seem to resist to promote those green products.

- **Lack of knowledge and confidence**

The study of Fuentes (2014) shows that some salespersons provide an answer that reinforced the 'green' aspect of the green product – such as accentuating the importance of buying the green product or providing more information about the green initiative. However, many salespeople instead produced an answer that ignored or marginalized the 'green' aspect – such as responding that they simply do not know much about the green product or telling the consumer that the green product is basically the same as any other product. In line with Fuentes (2014) results, Matthews et al., (2017) found that salespersons often lack knowledge, and hence communicate inaccurate information to shoppers. Moreover, the results show that the 'level of salesperson's confidence' is highly correlated with their 'level of knowledge' (corr= .738) and their 'level of enthusiasm' (corr= .629) (Matthews et al., 2017) . Finally, Allcott & Sweeney's, (2017) mention that salesperson's lack of self-efficacy is a possible explanation for their resistance to promote a higher-priced green alternative.

- **Latent demand**

Allcott & Sweeney (2017) found that agents preferentially market grey products above green products especially to consumers with latent demand for green products (i.e. consumers which have not enough money or are unaware of the product). They state that this finding suggest that agents' noncompliance is better described as "strategic" instead of "shirking"; agents do not inform consumers about green products because they know that, due to the initial purchase price, most consumers are not interested in the green product once informed. Therefore, sales agent experience consumer education (i.e. discussing energy efficiency) as reducing the probability of a sale due to extending sales times or potentially irritating customers (Allcott & Sweeney, 2017). Similarly, in Matthews et al. (2017) study, salespersons initially tried to sell a grey product in 36% of shopping experiences. Most of these salespeople began to show a stronger interest in selling the green product after mystery shoppers demonstrated their interest in the green product. However, in some shopping experiences, the prompt did not divert the salesperson's approach away from promoting a grey product. Some of these salespeople attempted to convince the mystery shopper that a non-green product would better suit their needs (Matthews et al., 2017).

- **Time-constrained sales interactions and limited (governmental) incentives**

Consumers are often unaware of green products or underestimate the benefits but salespeople might not be able to address these issues because they receive limited resources and work in time-constrained sales interactions (Allcott & Sweeney's, 2017). Additionally, currently there are no governmental incentives for salespersons to sell a green product over a grey product, and likewise there is no incentive to increase salesperson's willingness to sell those green products (Matthews et al., 2017). However, Allcott & Sweeney's, (2017) demonstrate that financial sales incentives do not always result in an increase of green product sales since salespersons make often a strategic decision whether they educate the consumer about the green product or not. Therefore, agents will provide more information when they receive sales incentives for green products with high demand, but they will not be very responsive to sales incentives if information has small effects on demand (Allcott & Sweeney, 2017).

The purpose of this chapter was to find answers on the following sub-questions;

(1) How are green products defined?

Many definitions and characteristics of green products exists in green marketing literature. Green products differ in their level of practices and impact on the environment and can range from conventional products, (e.g. products manufactured with green energy, transported environmentally friendly) to incremental or radical innovative products (e.g. LED screens, electric vehicles). Furthermore, different labels can be attached to green products since few regulations exist around these terms which results in loosely defined terms such as "environmental friendly", "non-toxic", "sustainable". In addition, services such as tourism and financial services also fall below "green products". Therefore, not surprisingly, confusion exists when to determine a product or services as "green".

(2) Are there differences between selling green products and new products?

Although green products are often innovative products and hence called eco-innovations, green and new products differ in certain respect. More specifically, green products are often not substitutes but complements of grey products and hence salespeople should concurrently pursue the sale of grey and green products at the same time. Furthermore, green products have often instrumental drawbacks (e.g. high prices and less convenience) and therefore salespersons should be able to counter these drawbacks. Additionally, the adoption of green products is driven by environmental attributes which means that salespersons must be able to explain the 'green aspect' of the product. Finally, the adoption of green products is driven by governmental support which is beyond salespersons control.

- *(3) Why do salespeople often resist to promote green products?*

First, scholars indicate that salespersons often lack knowledge and confidence to promote a higher-priced green alternative. Second, studies demonstrate that salespersons preferentially market grey products above green products especially to consumers with latent demand for green products (i.e. consumers which have not enough money or are unaware of the product). More specifically, salespeople experience discussing the green aspect of the product as reducing the probability of a sale due to extending sales times or potentially irritating customers. Additionally, since salespersons receive limited resources and work in time-constrained sales interactions, they might resist to address consumers' unawareness of green products. Finally, currently there are no governmental incentives for salespersons to sell a green product over a grey product, and likewise no incentive to increase salesperson's willingness to sell those green product exists.

3 Conceptual model and hypothesis

In this study we used the motivation-opportunity-ability (MOA) framework as a theoretical structure to identify factors that affect the allocation of effort to green products in comparison to grey products. Broadly speaking, motivation acts as a driver of behavior (action); opportunity represents the environmental or contextual mechanisms that enable action. Ability captures the individual's skills or knowledge base related to the action (Sabnis et al., 2013).

The MOA framework has been applied to explain a wide array of behaviors such as consumer choice (e.g. Bigné, Hernández, Ruiz, & Andreu, 2010), firm-level decision making (e.g. Wu, Balasubramanian, & Mahajan, 2004), salesperson's selling behavior (e.g. Fu et al., 2010) and pro-environmental behavior (e.g. Moons & De Pelsmacker, 2015). More specifically, we have chosen the MOA framework because it has been proven effectively in explaining salesperson's new product selling and cross-selling behavior (Fu et al., 2010; Schmitz, 2013). In addition, since this framework incorporates contextual mechanisms (i.e. opportunities), variables beyond salespersons control could be examined.

We selected the key variables related to the MOA framework by reviewing existing literature on green marketing (Chapter 2). First, given the instrumental drawbacks and the latent demand for green products, we expect that salesperson's green product commitment affects salesperson's decision to put effort into selling those products. Second, since the adoption of green products is driven by environmental attributes, we presume that environmental conscious salespersons are more inclined to communicate the green aspect and hence direct effort to sell those products. Additionally, scholars in green marketing demonstrate that salesperson's lack of abilities (i.e. knowledge and confidence) might hinder salespersons to promote green products. Therefore, we expect that salespersons with higher levels of green product sales experience and usage experience are more willing to put effort in selling those products. Finally, in line with Allcott & Sweeney's (2017) assumption that salespeople are not be able to address consumers' unawareness of green products because they receive limited resources and work in time-constrained sales interactions, we suggest that supplier's green product support moderates the relationship between salesperson's motivation/ability and effort.

Figure 3-1 presents the resulting conceptual framework. The hypothesized relationships are summarized in Table 3-1 and will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.
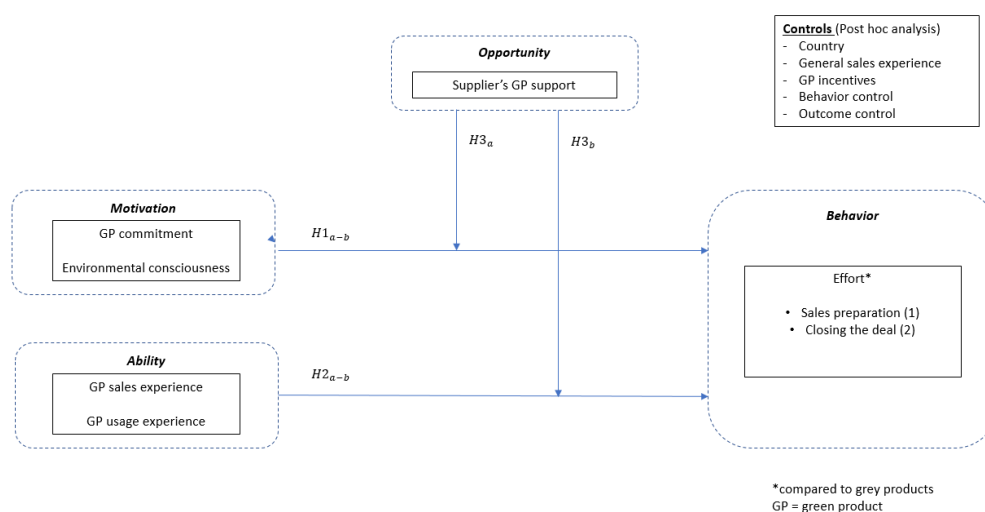
Figure 3-1: Conceptual model

Hypothesis	Statement
$H1_a$	GP commitment is positively related to effort.
$H1_b$	Environmental consciousness is positively related to effort.
$H2_a$	GP sales experience is positively related to effort.
$H2_b$	GP usage experience is positively related to effort.
$H3_a$	The positive effect of motivation on effort is stronger when supplier's GP support is higher.
$H3_b$	The positive effect of salesperson's ability (i.e. experience) on effort is stronger when supplier's GP support is higher.

3.1 Motivation

The motivation component of the MOA model is viewed as a force that directs individuals toward actions. More specifically, this component incorporates willingness, interest, and desire to engage in a determined behavior (MacInnis, Moorman, & Jaworski, 1991). Extending this to our research, motivation refers to the salesperson's willingness, interest and desire to put effort in selling green products compared to non-green products. In this research the motivation component captures salesperson's commitment and environmental consciousness.

3.1.1 Commitment

Salespersons who are committed to the green product are more likely to put effort in selling those products.

Hultink & Atuahene-Gima, (2000) investigated the relationship between salesperson's new product adoption and new product selling performance. Salesperson's product adoption is defined as the combination of the degree to which the salesforce accepts and takes on the goals held by others of the new product (i.e. commitment) and the extent to which the salesforce works hard to achieve those goals (i.e., effort). Hultink & Atuahene-Gima, 2000, found a positive linear relationship between salesperson's commitment and effort (corr.= .23, p<.05). Furthermore, the findings indicate that salespeople who lack commitment to a new product likely put effort in activities that are focused on short-term instead of activities that are focused on the long-term success of the new product. Similarly, Fu et al. (2010) research based on the theory of planned behavior found that salesperson's attitude toward selling the new product and subjective norms are positively correlated with selling intentions. Regarding the sales of green products, we expect to find in line with new product selling, a positive relationship between salesperson's commitment and effort. A salesperson who is highly committed to sell the green product and accepts and takes on the goals held by the organization, will likely work smart and hard to achieve those sales goals and focus on the long-term success of the green product. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed;

$H1_a$ Green product commitment is positively related to effort.

3.1.2 Environmental consciousness

Environmental conscious salespersons are more willing to put effort in selling green products compared to non-green products.

Many researchers investigated the influence of consumer's environmental consciousness (i.e. being concerned about the environment) on adoption of alternative fuel vehicles. For example, Jansson's (2011) empirical study, based on the value-belief-norm theory, states that adopters of alternative fuel vehicles are more influenced by environmentally related personal and social norms than non-adopters. In addition, Moons & De Pelsmacker (2015) results of their extended decomposed theory of planned behavior model revealed that people who are highly environmentally concerned pronounce a stronger intention to use the electric car. However, their study shows that individuals differing in environmentally concern do not show substantial difference in motivational structures. Egbue & Long, (2012) results indicate that while sustainability considerations influence respondents' vehicle purchase choice, the majority remains uncertain about the sustainability of electric vehicles compared to traditional gasoline-powered vehicles and other alternatives.

Although some studies indicate that environmental consciousness does not materialize into actual purchasing behavior (i.e., the so-called green attitude - behavior gap; e.g. Barbarossa & Pastore, 2015; Johnstone & Tan, 2015), we expect that environmentally conscious salespeople are more inclined to sell green vehicles. More specifically, in comparison to non-green products, selling green products gives environmentally conscious salespersons the opportunity to respond to environmental concerns by positively influencing consumer's environmentally conscious consumption. Furthermore, we expect that environmental conscious salespersons are better in reducing customer's uncertainty about the sustainability of the green product through reinforcing the 'green' aspect. Finally, we assume that 'green reservation' does not exist in the context of green products selling (as compared to green purchasing) since environmentally conscious salespersons could perceive their action (i.e. putting effort to sell green products) as "making a difference" enabling them to influence many consumers to be more environmentally conscious in their consumption. In other words, their action has direct impact. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posed;

$H1_b$ *Environmental consciousness is positively related to effort*

3.1 Abilities

The ability component is synonymous with skills and competences and reflects individual's beliefs about their own capacity during their performance and in the achievement of the results (Bigné et al., 2010). Applied to the context being analyzed, ability relates to individual's capacity to sell green products such as answering consumer's questions and offer test drives. We choice salesperson's green product experience and usage experience as important skills and competences to effectively sell those products. These factors were selected (not for example self-efficacy) since they can be clearly identified by managers and hence action could be taken to enhance effort of salespeople in the green product selling process.

3.1.1 Green product sales experience

The greater a salesperson's experience with the green product, the more likely he/she is to put effort into selling those products compared to grey products.

In new product selling literature, as far as we know, salesperson's sales experience is measured for existing products, not solely for new products, to predict salesperson's new product adoption (e.g. Ahearne, Rapp, Hughes, & Jindal, 2010; Hultink & Atuahene-Gima, 2000; Hultink et al., 2000) This is not surprising, since new products are likely to replace existing products in a short- or medium-term. However, green products (e.g. alternative fuel vehicles and organic food) do not always substitute less environmentally alternatives in the short term. As far as we know, no scholar has empirical investigated the relationship between salesperson's new or green selling experience and salesperson's new or green product adoption.

Regarding the sales of green products, we assume that experienced salespeople in selling the green product are likely to gain improved and elaborate understanding of green product selling situations, customer types, and their potential needs. This knowledge base should enable the salesperson to put effort into selling the green product in order to satisfy the needs of customers. Moreover, due to the gained insights of customer types and their needs, experienced salespeople might provide not only information to more interested consumers but also to the disinterested majority. Therefore we propose the following hypothesis;

$H2_a$ *Green product sales experience is positively related to effort.*

3.1.2 Green product usage experience

The greater salesperson's usage experience with the green product, the more likely he/she is to put effort into selling those products compared to grey products.

As far as we know, no scholars in new product selling literature have investigated the influence of the level of salesperson's product usage on salesperson's product adoption. However, this relationship has been thoroughly investigated for consumers. For example, Roger's diffusion innovation model indicates trialability of the product as an important influencer on consumer's product adoption (Roger, 1995). Regarding the adoption of green products, many scholars state that consumer's green product experience positively influence green product purchase decision (e.g. Bühne et al., 2015; Bennett et al., 2016; D'Souza, Taghian, Lamb, & Peretiatkos, 2006; Kumar & Ghodeswar, 2015; Ho, Lee, & Wu, 2009; Yeon Kim & Chung, 2011). This positive relationship is based on the assumption that consumer's behaviors (i.e. purchasing) results from learning (i.e. experience).

We assume that salesperson's usage intention and experience with the green product positively influences their willingness to put effort in selling those products. More specifically, salesperson's with high green product usage experience have obtained an improved and elaborate understanding of how the green product functions and can be consumed effectively. Therefore, they are able to answer customer's practical questions and give advice on how to overcome or minimalize instrumental drawbacks of the green product (e.g. how to extend the electrical vehicle range during the winter). Therefore the following hypothesis is posed;

$H2_b$ *Green product usage experience is positively related to effort.*

3.2 Opportunities

Opportunity refers to the favorable conditions that enable action (MacInnis et al., 1991). In our context, we assume that opportunity occurs when the salesperson gets support from the supplier such as assisting in selling the green product, in solving problems of customers and providing feedback on how to sell the green product.

Motivated salesperson's will put extra effort into selling the green product if they are high supported by the green product supplier.

Hultink & Atuahene-Gima (2000) study shows that the effect of sales force new product adoption on selling performance is stronger when the firm provides information on the background of the new product to salespeople (i.e. internal marketing). On the other hand, no support was found for the hypothesis that predicted that trust between sales managers and salespersons leads to a greater positive effect of new product adoption on selling performance. Moreover, supervisor's field attention (i.e. the extent to which the sales manager attends to the needs and problems of salespeople through field contacts) potentially hinders the effect of salesperson's new product adoption (i.e. commitment and effort) on new product selling performance. Hultink & Atuahene-Gima (2000) suppose that an explanation for this unexpected finding may be the build-up of their measurement scale. The items in their "field attention" scale refer more to the oversight than to the helping side of sales force attention. Selling a green product is relatively more challenging than selling a grey product or even a new product.

` Motivated salespeople may not be able to address consumers' unawareness of green products because they receive limited resources and work in time-constrained sales interactions (Allcott & Sweeney, 2017). Therefore, giving support (referring to the helping side) during the green product sales process could help salesperson's in making consumers more aware of the green product. In addition, the resources and effort that go into giving support for the green product provides indications of suppliers' commitment for the green product. Therefore, we propose that when suppliers give effective support, motivated salespersons are likely to increase their loyalty to the green product even more and hence will put more effort into selling green products. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis;

$H3_a$ *The positive effect of motivation on behavior (i.e. effort) is stronger when supplier's green product support is higher.*

Salesperson's with great experience (i.e. sales and use) will put extra effort into selling the green product if they receive high support from the green product supplier.

We presume that when suppliers give effective green product support, salespersons with great experience (i.e. sales and usage) will even be better armed to overcome the instrumental drawbacks of green products and hence put extra effort in selling those products. Therefore the following hypothesis is posed;

$H3_b$ *The positive effect of salesperson's experience with the green product on effort is stronger when supplier's green product support is higher.*

4 Methodology

This chapter discusses the used data collection technique, techniques to overcome the common method bias (CBS), the obtained sample size, and the used measurement scales.

4.1 Data collection

An online survey was made with the survey software Qualtrics. This software program was chosen since the survey data can be easily exported into SPSS with the according labels. To increase the response rate, since online surveys tend to be subject to low response, three actions were implemented (Blumberg et al., 2011). First, besides announcing the survey on the suppliers' portal, all sales managers were contacted by phone to highlight the importance of filling in the questionnaire and to figure out if they and their salespersons are willing to participate in the research. Second, we decided to personally visit 39 dealerships and 'hand out' the online questionnaire. Third, if the salesperson did not respond within four working days, he/she received a reminder email. After 8 working days, a new personal reminder was send. If the salesperson did not respond within 12 working days, he/ she was contacted by phone to find out why the survey was not yet completed. In addition, those who filled in the questionnaire received a personal resignation email and if applicable they were asked to remind their colleague(s) to fill in the questionnaire.

4.2 Overcome the common method bias

Because the predictor variables and the dependent variables are obtained from the same source and rater, common method bias might occur. It refers to "the variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the construct of interest" (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Therefore, we adopted some procedural remedies to overcome this type of bias. First, separation of measurement was accomplished by using methodological separation of measurement (i.e. use of differential formats). Second, we allowed the respondents' answers to be anonymous and we assured respondents that there are no right or wrong answers. These procedures should make respondents less likely to edit their responses to be more socially desirable (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Additionally, reversed items were added which should balance the questionnaire and help to overcome the common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Finally, we tested the survey on a small sample (n=4) of the target group before distributing the survey to the entire sample. This pilot study helped in improving scale items by decreasing ambiguous, unfamiliar terms , and vague concepts (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Although all these procedural remedies were accounted for as best as possible, the common method bias might still be present.

4.3 Sample

The sample consists of salespersons between 18 and 65 years who work at mono- and multi-brand franchised dealerships located in The Netherlands and Belgium (Flemish speaking part). The car manufacturer for which this research is conducted introduced as one of the first an affordable full electric vehicle to the European market and therefore knowledge and useful data about the sales of full electric vehicles are available. The approached dealers are responsible for selling both conventional and full electric vehicles and have between 1 to 5 sales persons employed. An invitation to the online survey was sent to 137 salespeople, of which 111 (81%) salespersons responded.

4.4 Measurement scales

All study constructs, except from salespersons' sales experience and effort-closing the deal, used multiple items and a five- or six-point Likert scale. Appendix A contains the details of the measurements.

Effort Salesperson's effort was measured in two ways. First, effort was measured by five items adapted from (Hultink & Atuahene-Gima, 2000a). Respondents were asked to indicate the level of effort they put into selling activities for the green product (e.g. prospecting for customers and using market information) compared to non-green products. Second, effort regarding closing the deal was quantified by asking salespersons the following question: "in the last three months for how many cars have you made a personalized offer, and how many of those offers (in percentage) were full electric cars."

GP commitment Salesperson's green product commitment was measured by five items adopted from (Hultink & Atuahene-Gima, 2000a). For example respondents were asked about their degree of enjoyment of discussing the green product with colleagues, or their degree of a strong feeling of duty to ensure the success of the green product.

Environmental consciousness The new environmental paradigm (NEP) scale of Dunlap & Van Liere (1978) was used to assess salesperson's environmental consciousness. This 15-item scale has been a widely used scale of pro-environmental orientation (Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig, & Jones, 2000). We reduced the NEP scale to six items, which seems most applicable to measure salesperson's environmental consciousness. More specifically, we selected item (3) "When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences", item (5) "Humans are severely abusing the environment", item (9) "Despite our special abilities humans are still subject to the laws of nature", item(10) "The so-called "ecological crisis" facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated", item (13) "The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset" and item (15) "If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe".

Sales experience Sales experience is defined as the number of years the salesperson has sold the green product in particular.

GP usage experience In the absence of scales for directing salesperson's green product usage experience, we developed a new measure scale. We selected the following four items: "I use the green product (i.e. FEV) for work purposes.", "I use the green product (i.e. FEV) for private purposes.", "I charge the green product (i.e. FEV) at home/work." and "I charge the green product (i.e. FEV) at a public charging station.".

Supplier's GP support Supplier's green product support was measured by five items adopted from Jong, Ruyter, & Lemmink (2004). Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the following statements: " The supplier acts in a responsive manner when we forward customer complaints about the green product.", "The knowledge of the supplier assists us in selling green products.", "The supplier is helpful in solving problems of customers.", "The quality of service delivered by the supplier toward salespeople is good.", and " The supplier provides good feedback on how to sell green products."

Next to these measures, we included the following control variables: country, general sales experience, green product incentives, behavior control, and outcome control.

General sales experience General sales experience was quantified by asking the respondent how many years he/she has been selling cars.

GP incentives The degree of green product incentives was measured by three items adopted from (Beuk, Malter, Spanjol, & Cocco, 2014). Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the following statements: "It makes financial sense for me to focus on selling the green product.", "Overall, I receive a larger financial incentive for selling the green product than for selling non-green products.", and "My pay increases are based on how well I sell the green product.".

Behavior control Behavior control was measured by three items adopted from (Oliver & Anderson, 1995). Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the following statements: "My manager makes sure I know what to do and how to do it.", "My manager frequently asks me for information on how I'm doing.", and "My manager gives explicit direction to me.".

Outcome control Similarly to behavior control, outcome control was measured by three items adopted from (Oliver & Anderson, 1995). Respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the following statements: "My manager decides who's good by looking strictly at each salesperson's bottom line.", "My manager only values tangible results.", and "My manager does not care what I do as long as I perform.".

5 Data analysis and results

To test the hypotheses of the conceptual model, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied. This analysis technique was chosen since it is especially powerful in cases where the research involves small sample sizes, and does not make assumption about the distributions of the data (Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). The software tool SmartPLS 3.0. was used to analyze the obtained data and formulate conclusions and managerial recommendations. For other support analyses, such as examination of the data, the software package IBM SPSS Statistics 24 was used.

5.1 Data analysis

This subchapter discusses which techniques were applied to identify missing values and outliers, and the results from the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. Finally, this section contains the correlation matrix of the key variables.

5.1.1 Missing values
Individual cases with as little as 10 percent missing data can generally be ignored, except when the missing data occurs in a nonrandom fashion (e.g. concentration in a specific set of questions)(Hair et al., 2013). However, in our study, the responses with missing data were answered for less than 90 % of the questions. Therefore, all individual cases with missing data were deleted. In doing so, 101 Individual cases remain from the initial 111 cases.

5.1.2 Outliers
Outliers are observations which are distinctly different from the other observations. Hence, these cases can be seen as influential observations in regression models since they have a disproportionate effect on the regression results (Hair et al., 2013). In this study, three methods were used to detect outliers.

First, we checked the comments which the respondent could leave at the end of the questionnaire. One respondent stated that he is not always willing to respond to certain questions and find an option "I do not want to answer" desirable. Furthermore, one respondents mentioned that he/she has not had enough chance to sell the green product (because of low demand and low green product sales experience) and therefore could not correctly answer certain questions. Finally, one respondent wrote the following comment " if people do not immediately respond to a call for a survey it has usually a reason" We decided to delete those three cases, since these salespersons indicated they were either unwilling or unable to answer some questions or statements.

Furthermore, outliers in this study were identified by using the method of the mean plus or minus 2.5 standard deviation (SD), which is based on the characteristics of a normal distribution (Filzmoser, 2004). However, this method has some disadvantages. First, by using the mean as central tendency indicator, it assumes that the distribution is normal (outliers included). In addition, both the mean and the standard deviation are particularly sensitive to outliers. Finally, this method is very unlikely to detect outliers in small samples (Filzmoser, 2004). Despite these disadvantages, we identified a possible outlier, regarding the percentage of written offers for green products compared to non-green products. We presume that the respondent misread the question and gave the total number (i.e. not

percentage) of written green product offers compared to non-green products. Since, if we recalculate the given 'amount' toward percentage, this answer seems to be more reasonable. In addition, we conduct a bivariate assessment by jointly assing the number of written quotes for green and non-green products and the percentage of quotes for green products via a scatterplot (Appendix B). The case indeed fall markedly outside the range of the other observations and therefore we decided to exclude the case from the sample (Hair et al., 2013).

Finally, a multivariate detection method was used. In a multivariate outlier detection, the distance of each observation is measured in a multidimensional space from the mean center of all observations (Hair et al., 1998). A single value, the Mahalanobis value (D, is provided for each observation. The D^2 is calculated in SPSS, then transformed to a χ2 distribution, and is consequently subtracted from 1. Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson (2013) propose a cut-off point of .001. Two separate χ2 distributions were calculated: one for commitment and effort, and one for all factors expected to influence effort. Results show two multivariate outliers and by further inspection we decide to omit both cases.

In the end, 6 outliers were identified and the remaining 95 cases will be analyzed.

5.1.3 *Exploratory factor analysis*

In the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the factor structure is explored on how the variables relate and group based on inter-variable correlations (Hair et al., 2013). As explained in paragraph 4.3, all constructs used in this study are adopted from validated scales except from the construct usage experience which includes new items. Appendix C shows the results of the EFA of the constructs using orthogonal rotation (varimax) in SPSS. As can be seen in the pattern matrix, the item environmental consciousness and green product incentives have rather low factor loadings and hence convergent validity could be a problem. But before removing some items, tests related to reliability and validity will be conducted.

Harman's single-factor test is one of the most widely used techniques to address the issue of common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This test investigate if the majority of the variance is explained by a single factor. In an exploratory factor analysis, the unrotated factor solutions should be examined to determine the number of factors that are necessary to account for the variance in the variables. If a single factor emerges or one general factor accounts for the majority of the covariance among the measures then a substantial amount of common method variance is present (Podsakoff et al., 2003). As can be seen in Appendix C, no single factor accounts for the majority of the variance in the model.

5.1.4 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is the next step to confirm the factor structure. Tests related to reliability and validity were used to determine if the constructs of the conceptual model are sufficient to investigate the hypotheses.

The remainder of this paragraph will elaborate on the reliability and validity test that ultimately resulted in the deletion of some items. The items were tested on the following criteria's;

- **Item reliability: Factor loadings**

Hair et al., (2013) state that with a sample size of 100 and above, a factor loading of .55 is appropriate. Because the sample size for this research is 95, a cut-off value of .55 is chosen.

- **Scale reliability: Cronbach's alpha**

The scale reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha measures for all constructs. In general a value of .7 to .8 is stated as an acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha (Field, 2013).

- **Internal consistency: Composite Reliability (CR)**

Cronbach's alpha has the tendency to underestimate internal reliability in PLS path models and therefore, the more appropriate composite reliability (CR) measure is assessed (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). Values above .7 are regarded as satisfactory (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

- **Convergent validity: Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

The convergent validity is assessed by using the Average Variance Extracted, or AVE-value. If a latent variable has an AVE-value above .5, this indicates that this variable explains more than half of the variance in the items (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to Hair et al. (2010) a cut-off above .5 is regarded as satisfactory.

As can be seen in Table 5-1, the constructs 'environmental consciousness' and 'GP incentives' do not meet all four criteria as indicated above.

Regarding the construct 'environmental consciousness', the two items ,ENV_CONC_1 and rec_ENV_CONC4, have factor loadings below the cut-off value of .55. Furthermore, the AVE-value of environmental consciousness does not surpass the cut-off value of .5. Based on these findings, we decided to delete both items. After deletion of the items (i.e. ENV_CONC_1 and rec_ENV_CONC4), the AVE-value of environmental consciousness increased from .41 to .52 and exceed the cut-off point of .5. Furthermore, after rejecting both items, the three other criteria are met.

Regarding the construct 'GP incentives' INCENT_GP_1 and INCENT_GP_2, have factor loadings below .55. Additionally, the construct does not surpass the cut-off values for the Cronbach Alpha, CR, and AVE. We decided to delete both items (i.e. 'INCENT_GP_1 and INCENT_GP_2).

Table 5-1: Confirmatory factor analysis, reliability and validity tests

Construct	Item	ORIGINAL				After ITEM deletion			
		Factor loadings	*Cronbach's Alpha*	*CR*	*AVE*	*Factor loadings*	*Cronbach's Alpha*	*CR*	*AVE*
Effort (sales preparation)			.85	.90	.67				
	EFFORT_1	.76							
	EFFORT_2	.87							
	EFFORT_3	.84							
	EFFORT_4	.85							
Commitment			.77	.84	.51				
	COMMIT_1	.72							
	COMMIT_2	.78							
	COMMIT_3	.64							
	COMMIT_4	.76							
	COMMIT_5	.66							
Environmental Consciousness			.71	.80	***.41***		.70	.81	.52
	ENV_CONC_1	***.40***							
	ENV_CONC_2	.77				.77			
	ENV_CONC_3	.72				.75			
	rec_ENV_CONC_4	***.52***							
	ENV_CONC_5	.67				.70			
	ENV_CONC_6	.67				.67			
Usage Experience			.90	.93	.77				
	GP_EXP_USE_1	.95							
	GP_EXP_USE_2	.91							
	GP_EXP_USE_3	.90							
	GP_EXP_USE_4	.74							
Supplier's Support			.88	.91	.67				
	SUPP_GP_1	.83							
	SUPP_GP_2	.82							
	SUPP_GP_3	.88							
	SUPP_GP_4	.80							
	SUPP_GP_5	.74							
GP Incentives			.67	.38	.34				
	INCENT_GP_1	.24							
	INCENT_GP_2	.73							
	INCENT_GP_3	.17							
Behavior control			.90	.93	.82				
	INCENT_GP_1	.85							
	INCENT_GP_2	.91							
	INCENT_GP_3	.96							
Outcome control			.77	.76	.55				
	INCENT_GP_1	.78							
	INCENT_GP_2	.94							
	INCENT_GP_3	.66							

- **Discriminant validity: Fornell-Larcker criterion**

The discriminant validity explains whether a construct is truly distinctive to other constructs (Hair et al., 2013). To assess the discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was used. This criterion is named after the scholars which state that the correlations of any construct in the model and the construct of interest should never exceed the square root of the AVE-value of the construct of interest (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As can be seen in Appendix D, this criterion was met for all key constructs.

5.1.5 Correlations, mean and standard deviations

Once the construct measures were confirmed as reliable and valid, the correlations between the variables could be investigated. In Table 5-2, the correlations between the key variables are shown, including the mean (M), the standard deviation (SD) and Cronbach's alpha (α). The skewness and Kurstosis values of the key variables can be found in Appendix E.

Looking at the means, salespersons in this sample have on average 13 years of general sales experience and 3 years of green product sales experience. Salespersons who participated in this research roughly produce 5% offers for green products (i.e. FEV's) compared to grey products (i.e. conventional vehicles). In contrast to our expectation, on average, salespersons seem to put more effort in sales preparation for green products (M=3.38) compared to grey products. Furthermore, salespersons rate the support given by the supplier (M=3.18), their GP commitment (M= 3.27), environmental consciousness (M=3.57), and behavior control (M=3.88) above average. On the other hand, green product sales incentives (M=1.57), and green product usage experience (M=2.24) score below average.

Looking at the correlation matrix, we see that indeed salesperson's motivation and commitment variables are correlated with effort. But remarkably, the opportunity variable (i.e. supplier's support) is not significantly correlated with any key variable.

Looking at the control variables, not surprisingly, general sales experience and green product sales experience are correlated. Furthermore, the correlation matrix indicates that country is negatively correlated with effort directed to sales preparation. This finding is discussed in more detail in the post-hoc analysis (Chapter 5.2.2).

Tabel 5-2: Correlation Matrix for Key Variables, Belgium and Dutch Sample (n=95)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.GP effort- sales preparation (a)	-											
2. GP Effort – closing the deal (d)	.38**	-										
3. GP commitment (a)	.37**	.34**	-									
4. Environmental consciousness (a)	.30**	.20	.14	-								
5. GP sales Experience (c)	.21**	.27**	.15	.15	-							
6. GP Usage Experience (b)	.14	.28**	.27**	.06	.13	-						
7. Supplier's GP support (a)	.16	.08	.04	-.06	-.01	.05	-					
8. Country (e)	-.27**	-.09	-.17	-.26*	-.03	.13	.11	-				
9. GP incentives (a)	.13	.02	.11	-.12	-.17	.04	.09	.03	-			
10. General sales experience (c)	.14	.17	.23*	-.04	.43**	-.02	.02	-.10	-.00	-		
11. Behavior control (a)	.08	.17	.05	.02	-.01	-.06	.18	-.22*	.18	.11	-	
12. Outcome control (a)	.08	.08	.08	.02	.01	-.02	.10	-.14	.09	-.00	.01	-
M	3.38	4.88	3.27	3.57	3.45	2.24	3.18	.6	1.57	13.32	3.88	2.56
SD	.68	3.40	.60	.56	2.07	1.31	.66	.49	.69	8.04	.83	.83
α	.85	-	.77	.70	-	.90	.88	-	.80	-	.90	.77

Significance levels: ***p < .01,**p < .05, * p < .10 (t-values respectively > 2.58, > 1.96, > 1.65)

Measurement scales: (a) 5-point Likert scale, (b) 6-point-Likert scale, (c) number of years, (d) % offers green products compared to non-green products , (e) categorical variable 0 = Belgium and 1= The Netherlands

5.2 Model results

Having investigated the correlations between the key variables, the conceptual model can be examined. But before we analyze the data with structural equation modeling (SEM), we check whether the SEM-requirements are met.

5.2.1 SEM-requirements

In order to conduct PLS-SEM analysis, requirements for the sample size and collinearity of variables should be met (Hair et al., 2013)

- **Sample size**

We computed the required sample size using the G* power tool. When requiring a medium to large effect size (.25), an alpha probability of .05 and a medium power of .8 and 9 predictor variables, the recommended sample size is 89 (Appendix F). Our obtained sample size of 95 satisfies this requirement.

- **Collinearity**

Before we can assess the structural model results, we need to assess the collinearity of the variables. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was used. A VIF value above 5.00 in the predictor variable is an indication of collinearity that is too high (Hair et al., 2013). As can be seen in Table 5-3 and 5-4, none of the variables in the two models exceeded the cut-off point of 5.00.

Table 5-3: VIF scores; Dependent variable: sales preparation

Variable	VIF
GP commitment	1.21
Environmental consciousness	1.25
GP Sales experience	1.16
GP Usage experience	1.14
Supplier's GP support	1.02

Table 5-4: VIF scores; Dependent variable: closing the deal

Variable	VIF
GP commitment	1.21
Environmental consciousness	1.13
GP Sales experience	1.11
GP Usage experience	1.14
Supplier's GP support	1.02

5.2.2 Path estimations

The outcomes of running the Smart-PLS algorithm and Bootstrapping in SmartPLS 3.0 on both models are displayed in Figure 5-1 and Figure 5-2 and the path coefficients are summarized in Table 5-5 and Table 5-6.

Looking at the relative importance of the variables in predicting the dependent construct effort - sales preparation, we see that commitment (β=.26, p<.01) is most important, followed by environmental consciousness (β=.25, p<.05) and sales experience (β=.23, p<.05). In contrast, usage experience has no influence on salesperson's effort regarding sales preparation for green products. Furthermore, support has a slightly positive effect (β=.20, p<0.10) and the moderating effects are insignificant.

With a R^2 value of .319 for effort (sales preparation), roughly 32% of the variance of this construct can be explained by the model.

The effect sizes, represented by the f^2 values in Appendix G Table 0-5, are between .06 and .08, indicating rather low effects of the relationships (Hair et al., 2013).

Figure 5-1: SmartPLS output; initial model R^2 effort-sales preparation = .32

Table 5-5: Overview of path coefficients; initial model R^2 effort-sales preparation = .32

Paths Modelled			Coefficient	t-value	Hypothesis
GP commitment	$\rightarrow H1_a(1)$	**Effort-sales preparation**	**.26 *****	**2.65**	**Supported**
Environmental consciousness	$\rightarrow H1_b(1)$	**Effort- sales preparation**	**.25 ****	**2.42**	**Supported**
GP sales Experience	$\rightarrow H2_a(1)$	**Effort- sales preparation**	**.23 ****	**2.55**	**Supported**
GP usage Experience	$\rightarrow H2_b(1)$	Effort- sales preparation	.02	.23	Not Supported
Support* GP Commitment	$\rightarrow H3_a(1)$	Effort- sales preparation	.05	.40	Not supported
Support* GP Environmental consciousness	$\rightarrow H3_a(1)$	Effort- sales preparation	-.08	.75	Not supported
Support* GP sales experience	$\rightarrow H3_b(1)$	Effort- sales preparation	-.14	1.41	Not supported
Support* GP usage experience	$\rightarrow H3_b(1)$	Effort- sales preparation	-.17	1.36	Not supported

Significance levels: ***p < .01,**p < .05, * *p* < .10 (t-values respectively > 2.58, > 1.96, > 1.65)

Looking at the relative importance of the variables in predicting the dependent construct effort- closing the deal, we see that commitment (β=.25, p<.01) is most important, followed by sales experience (β=.21, p<.05) and usage experience (β=.21, p<.05). In contrast to previous model, environmental consciousness has no influence on salesperson's effort regarding closing the deal. Furthermore, support has no direct or moderating effect between motivation or ability variables and effort.

With a R^2 value of .275 for effort (closing the deal), roughly 28% of the variance of this variable can be explained by the model.

The effect sizes, represented by the f^2 values in Appendix G Table 0-6, are between .05 and .07, indicating rather low effects of the relationships (Hair et al., 2013).
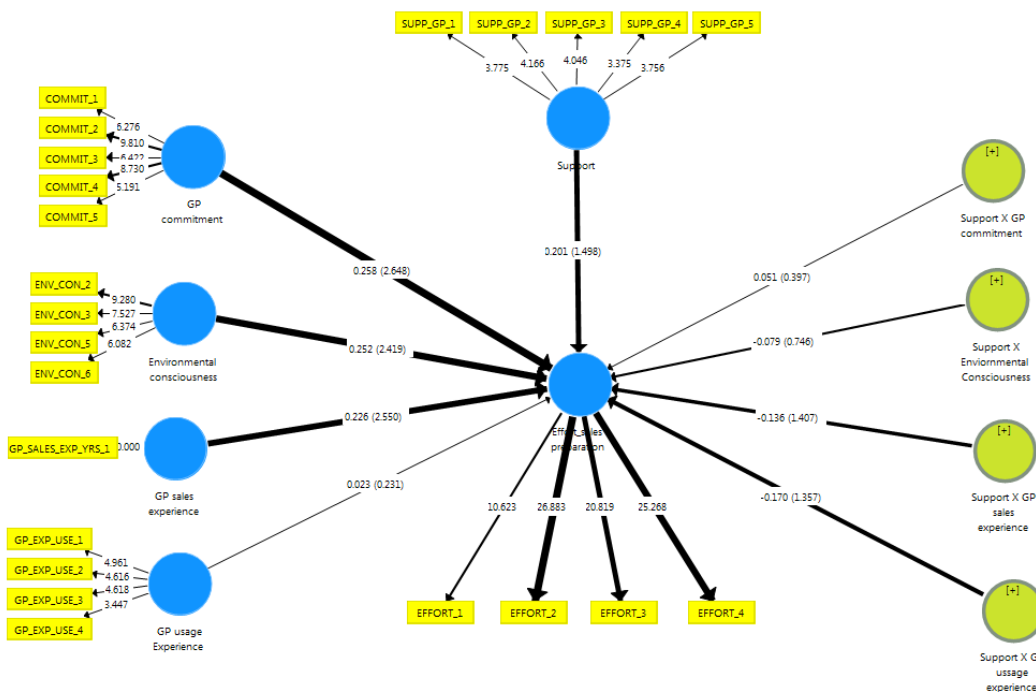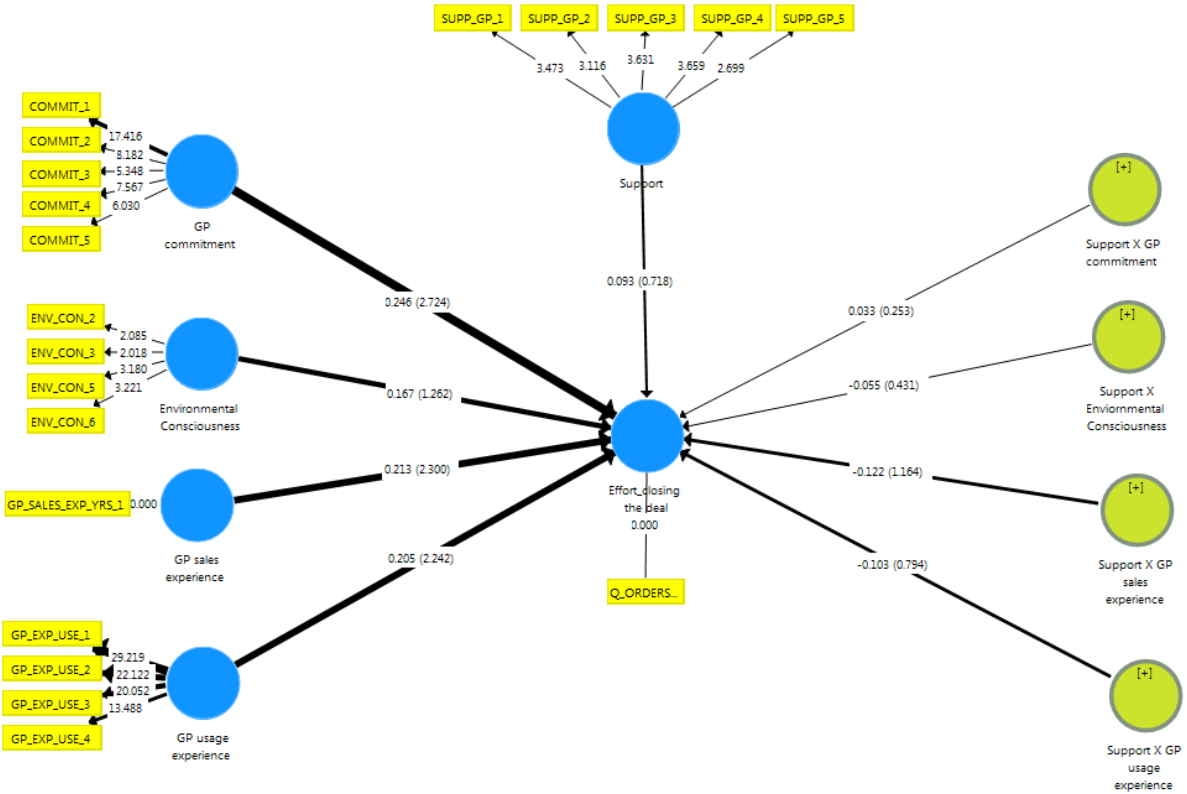

Figure 5-2: SmartPLS output; initial model, R^2 effort-closing the deal=.28

Table 5-6: Overview of path coefficients; initial model, R^2 effort-closing the deal=.28

Paths Modelled			Coefficient	t-value	Hypothesis
GP commitment	$\rightarrow H1_a (2)$	**Effort-closing the deal**	**.25 *****	**2.72**	**Supported**
Environmental consciousness	$\rightarrow H1_b(2)$	Effort-closing the deal	.17	1.26	Not supported
GP sales Experience	$\rightarrow H2_a(2)$	**Effort-closing the deal**	**.21 ****	**2.30**	**Supported**
GP usage Experience	$\rightarrow H2_b(2)$	**Effort-closing the deal**	**.21 ****	**2.24**	**Supported**
Support* GP Commitment	$\rightarrow H3_a(2)$	Effort-closing the deal	.03	.25	Not supported
Support* GP Environmental consciousness	$\rightarrow H3_a(2)$	Effort-closing the deal	-.06	.43	Not supported
Support* GP sales experience	$\rightarrow H3_b(2)$	Effort-closing the deal	-.12	1.16	Not supported
Support* GP usage experience	$\rightarrow H3_b(2)$	Effort-closing the deal	-.10	.79	Not supported

Significance levels: ***p < .01,**p < .05, * *p* < .10 (t-values respectively > 2.58, > 1.96, > 1.65)

In conclusion, running Smart-PLS algorithm and Bootstrapping in SmartPLS 3.0 on both models demonstrates that commitment and sales experience are positively related with effort. Therefore, $H1_a$ and $H2_a$ are supported. Environmentally consciousness is only positively related with sales preparation and usage experience is only positively related with closing the deal. Consequently, $H1_b$ and $H2_b$ are partially supported. Finally, $H3_a$ and $H3_b$ are rejected since supplier's support does not moderate the relationship between motivation or ability variables and effort.

Figure 5-3: Conceptual model with tested hypotheses

5.3   Post hoc analysis

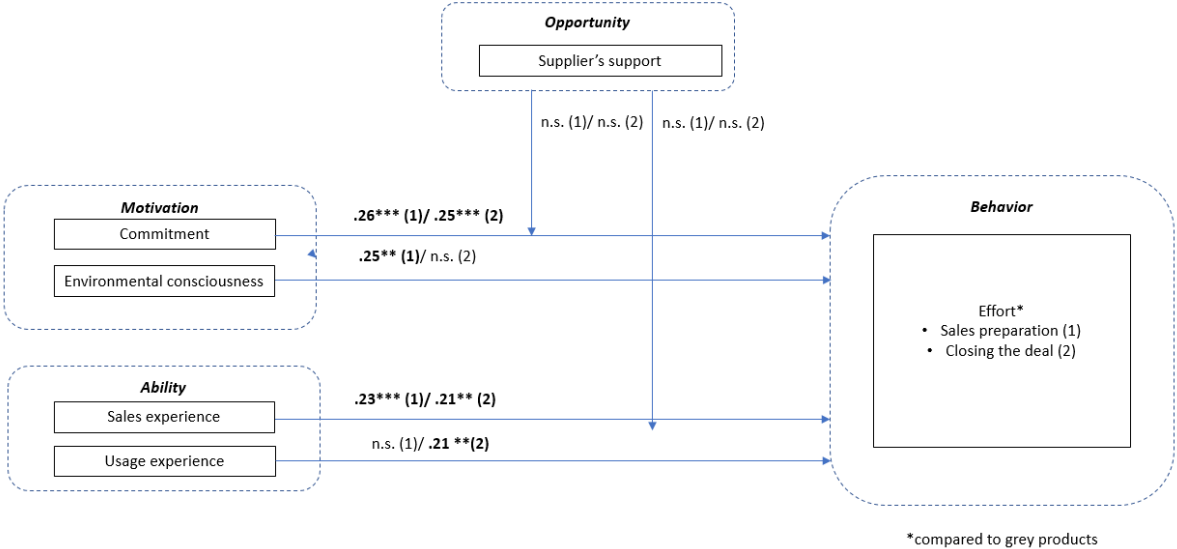After the hypothesized relationships were tested, additional analyses are conducted to check for other effects. We took some controls into considerations and tested for other moderating effects.

5.3.1   Controls

Controls are potentially confounding variables that we need to account for, but that don't drive our initial model (Hair et al., 2013). In this study three control variables are implemented; country, general sales experience, and green product incentives.

Looking at the control variables (Appendix H), we see that only country (β-.17, p<.10) is negatively related with effort directed to sales preparation. In other words, Dutch salespersons seem to put less effort into green product sales preparation compared to Belgian salespersons. A possible explanation for this finding is the difference in governmental support. Whereas the Belgian government makes full electric vehicles attractive for consumers, the Dutch government targets businesses. But remarkably no difference is found between the countries regarding the level of effort directed to close the deal (i.e. the percentage of offers for green products compared to grey products).

Additionally, after bootstrapping both initial models with control variables, not all confirmed hypothesis of the initial model are still confirmed. In the first model (Table 5-7), $H1_a(1)$ and $H1_b(1)$ (i.e. commitment and environmental consciousness) are no longer supported but marginally supported. On the other hand, $H2_a(1)$ (i.e. green product sales experience) is still supported. The R^2 value for effort (sales preparation) increased from .319 to .358.

Table 5-7: Differences after adding control variables in the first model (dependent variable = effort-sales preparation)

Hypothesis	Initial model (R^2 effort-sales preparation=.32)			Initial model + controls (R^2 effort-sales preparation=.36)		
	Coefficient	t-value		Coefficient	t-value	
$H1_a(1)$	**.26 *****	**2.65**	**Supported**	**.19***	**1.85**	**Marginally Supported**
$H1_b(1)$	**.25 ****	**2.42**	**Supported**	**.23***	**1.92**	**Marginally Supported**
$H2_a(1)$	**.23 ****	**2.55**	**Supported**	**.26*****	**2.66**	**Supported**
$H2_b(1)$	.02	.23	Not Supported	.04	.35	Not Supported
$H3_a(1)$	.05	.40	Not supported	.08	.61	Not supported
$H3_a(1)$	-.08	.75	Not supported	-.14	1.22	Not supported
$H3_b(1)$	-.14	1.41	Not supported	-.13	1.30	Not supported
$H3_b(1)$	-.17	1.36	Not supported	-.16	1.31	Not supported

Significance levels: ***p < .01,**p < .05, * *p* < .10 (t-values respectively > 2.58, > 1.96, > 1.65)

In the second model (Table 5-8), we can see that after adding the control variables all the supported hypotheses in the initial model are still valid. In other words - regardless of country, general sales experience, and green product (financial) incentives - commitment, green product sales experience and green product usage experience are positively related with effort directed to close the deal. The R^2 value for effort (closing the deal) marginally increased from .275 to .281.

Table 5-8: Differences after adding control variables in the second model (dependent variable = effort-closing the deal)

Hypothesis	Initial model (R^2 effort-closing the deal=.28)			Initial model + controls (R^2 effort-closing the deal=.28)		
	Coefficient	*t-value*		*Coefficient*	*t-value*	
H1$_a$(2)	**.25 *****	**2.72**	**Supported**	**.22****	**2.29**	**Supported**
H1$_b$(2)	.17	1.26	Not supported	.17	1.20	Not Supported
H2$_a$(2)	**.21 ****	**2.30**	**Supported**	**.19****	**1.96**	**Supported**
H2$_b$(2)	**.21 ****	**2.24**	**Supported**	**.22****	**2.12**	**Supported**
H3$_a$(2)	.03	.25	Not supported	.03	.24	Not supported
H3$_a$(2)	-.06	.43	Not supported	-.07	.45	Not supported
H3$_b$(2)	-.12	1.16	Not supported	-.14	1.25	Not supported
H3$_b$(2)	-.10	.79	Not supported	-.11	.79	Not supported

Significance levels: ***p < .01,**p < .05, * *p* < .10 (t-values respectively > 2.58, > 1.96, > 1.65)

5.3.2   Moderating effects; behavior, outcome control, and incentives

To test whether the relationships between salesperson's motivation and abilities are influenced by opportunities from the retailer (i.e. sales manager), outcome - ,behavioral control and green product incentives moderating effects are examined. Only one moderating effect has been found significant (Table 5-9). The interaction effect is visualized in Figure 5-4 and the bootstrapping outcome and path estimations are displayed in Appendix H.

Table 5-9: Moderating effect; path coefficient

Moderating variable	Relationship moderated	Coefficient	t-value	New R^2
Outcome control	GP sales experience -> Effort – closing the deal	-.20	1.71	.28

As can be seen in Figure 5-4, the higher the level of outcome control, the weaker the relationship between green product sales experience and effort directed to close the deal. An explanation for this finding may be that in case of greater levels of outcome control, experienced salespeople put less effort in closing the deal as soon as they experience that further promoting the green product and attempts to close the deal reduce the probability of a sale.
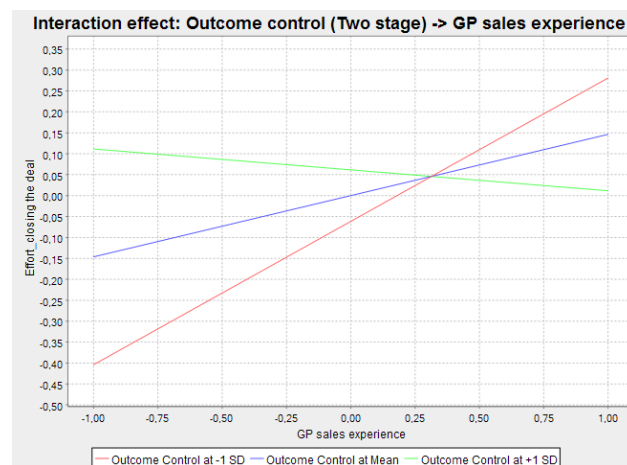

Figure 5-4: Interaction effect of outcome control

6   Discussion and conclusion

This chapter serves as a concluding part of the master thesis project. First, the main findings will be discussed. Thereafter, the theoretical and managerial implications are discussed. Finally, limitations and directions for future research are provided.

6.1   Discussion of results

The aim of this research is to address the research question, as stated in Section 1.3;

Which factors influence salesperson's decision to put a larger amount of effort into selling green products compared to grey products?

In this study we assumed that salesperson's motivation (i.e. commitment and environmental consciousness), abilities (i.e. green product sales and usage experience) and the opportunities offered by the supplier to sell the green product are particularly important in influencing salesperson's decision to invest a larger amount of effort in selling green products compared to grey products. In order to find out whether these factors influence the degree to which a salesperson is willing to put effort in selling green products, partial least squares structural equation modeling was used to test the hypothesized relationships.

The results show that, with the selected antecedents, the conceptual model is able to predict 32% of the variance in salesperson's effort directed to sales preparation and 28% variance in effort directed to close the deal.

In line with research in new product selling (e.g. Fu et al., 2010; Hultink & Atuahene-Gima, 2000), this study shows that green product commitment is positively related with effort. Furthermore, our research indicates that the more a salesperson is experienced in selling green products, the more he/she puts effort toward selling those products.

Regarding salesperson's level of environmental consciousness, our study reveals that environmental consciousness is positively related with the level of sales preparation (e.g. amount of time spent to answer customer questions and the amount of contact with the customer) but not with the level of closing the deal (i.e. measured as the number of offers placed for green products compared to grey products).

Next to that, this study demonstrates that salesperson's with greater usage experience allocate more effort to close the deal. On the other hand, salesperson's usage experience has no impact on the level of effort allocated to sales preparation.

Remarkably, supplier's support has a marginally effect on a salesperson's decision to put more effort in sales preparation and has even no effect on the level of effort directed towards closing the deal. Moreover, supplier's support does not moderate the relationship of a salesperson's motivation and ability on effort.

In the post hoc analysis, we took controls into considerations and tested for other moderating effects. First, we included the control variables; country, general sales experience, and green product incentives. We found that Dutch salespersons seem to put less effort into green product sales preparation compared to Belgian salespersons. A possible explanation for this finding is the difference in governmental support. Whereas the Belgian government makes full electric vehicles attractive for consumers, the Dutch government provides green product incentives especially towards businesses. Additionally, after we included the control variables, not all confirmed hypothesis of the initial model are still valid. To be more precise, commitment and environmental consciousness are no longer significantly (i.e. $p < .10$ instead of $p < .05$) related with effort directed to sales preparation. However, the positive relationship between green product sales experience and sales preparation is still significant at the .05 level. Finally, we found that -regardless of country, general sales experience, and green product (financial) incentives - commitment, green product sales experience and green product usage experience are positively related with salesperson's effort to close the deal.

Second, to test whether the relationships between salesperson's motivation and abilities on effort are influenced by opportunities from the retailer (i.e. sales manager), outcome - ,behavioral control and green product incentives moderating effects were examined. Only one moderating effect has been found significant. More specifically, the relationship between green product sales experience and effort is moderated by the level of outcome control such that a higher level of outcome control weakens the relationship between green product sales experience and effort toward closing the deal.

Overall, we can conclude that salesperson's decision to put effort in selling green products compared to grey products is most strongly influenced by green product sales experience. Furthermore, green product usage experience seems to be an important predictor in the level of effort directed to close the deal. Finally, we assume that governmental support does impact salesperson's green product selling behavior.

6.2 Implications

In this section both the theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

6.2.1 Theoretical implications

This master thesis project deepens the understanding of the green product selling process, and provides valuable theoretical insights. Most importantly, this study is the first which empirically investigated which factors influence salesperson's decision to put more effort into selling green products compared to grey products.

First, while scholars in green marketing measured salesperson's abilities and attitudes by asking customers to rate those factors, our study includes self-reported measures. Furthermore, we collected quantitative data regarding the amount of offers made for green products compared to grey products instead of asking customers on their willingness to purchase the green products. Our finding are in line with green marketing studies (e.g. Tsarenko et al., 2013; Allcott & Sweeney, 2017 Matthews et al., 2017) which posit that salesperson's attitudes and abilities are positively related with their willingness to promote green products. More specifically, our study demonstrates that salespersons who are more committed and have greater green product sales experience are more likely to put effort into green product sales preparation and closing the deal compared to grey products.

Second, no studies in new product selling have examined eco-innovations (i.e. highly innovative green products) sales practices in a business to consumer context. This research adds to this research domain since eco-innovations differs from new products in several aspects. One of the differences is that green products do not often completely replace grey products. Consequently, the effect of salesperson's sales experience solely regarding the green product (i.e. not in general) can be examined. The findings indicate that salesperson's general sales experience does not influence their effort directed to selling green products, whereas salesperson's green product sales experience does. This finding indicates that for selling green products, a salesperson needs different sales skills than for selling grey products.

Third, as far as we know, we are the first to investigate the influence of salesperson's green product usage experience on a salesperson's effort toward selling the green product. Remarkably, whereas salesperson's usage experience does not have a direct impact on the effort directed to green product sales preparation, it does has a significant impact on the effort directed to close the deal. Moreover, usage experience is highly correlated with commitment. This finding might indicate that salespersons with great usage experience are more inclined to give customers the opportunity to spend time with the green product (i.e. offer a test drive) and hence put less effort into sales preparation (e.g. prospecting for customers and using market information).

Fourth, although many scholars investigated the role of environmental consciousness on green consumer behavior (e.g. Johnstone & Tan, 2015; Jansson, 2011; Barbarossa & Pastore, 2015), no scholars have investigated the impact of salesperson's level of environmental consciousness on green selling behavior and consumer's purchase intention. Our research revealed that environmental conscious salespersons are more inclined to put effort into green product sales preparation compared to grey products. On the other hand, we found no effect of environmental consciousness on effort directed to close the deal. A possible explanation is that environmental consciousness salespeople target mainly other environmental conscious people who are at the end not willing to buy the green product because of the high purchase price (i.e. the green attitude-behavior gap). Another explanation could be that, in contrast to advises from green retailing scholars (e.g. Ritu Sinha, 2011; Fuentes, 2014) environmental conscious salespeople reinforce too much the 'green aspect' of the green product, which hinders customers from adopting the green product. This explanation can be further reinforced by Johnstone & Tan, (2015) finding. They found that there is a stigma attached to 'being green. Hence, a green stereotype (i.e. environmental conscious salesperson) may create additional barriers to participate in green consumption practices, and in some situations it may even generate resistance towards some green consumption behaviors (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). In other words, a consumer may avoid participating in green consumption activities if they feel they are being pressured by the salesperson to do so.

6.2.2   Managerial implications

Besides the aforementioned theoretical implications, this research provides some valuable insights for sales managers, as well as product suppliers. We used the importance-performance map analysis (IPMA) to prioritize managerial actions (Hair et al., 2013). More specifically, it is preferable that managers primarily focus on improving the performance of those factors that exhibit a large importance regarding their explanation of the effort directed to selling green products, but at the same time, have a relatively low performance.

- **Recruit and retain salespersons with many years of green product sales experience**

Regarding increasing salesperson's effort directed toward green product sales preparation compared to grey products, the IPMA (Figure 6-1) suggests that sales managers should especially pay attention to salesperson's level of green product sales experience. Furthermore, as can be seen in Figure 6-2, green product sales experience scores high on importance but low on performance regarding their explanation for closing the deal. Therefore, we suggest managers to include salesperson's green product sales experience in their recruitment processes. Moreover, this finding highlights the importance of retaining their salespeople, since salespersons with many years of green product sales experience are scarce. Considering the fact that many competitors are at the moment for the first time developing green products besides grey products, an imbalance of demand and supply of salespersons with great green product sales experience will arise.

Finally, our research indicates that sales managers should be mindful regarding the control system they adopt. More specifically, salesperson's with many years of green product sales experience put less effort into closing the deal if the sales manager focusses especially on their outcomes.
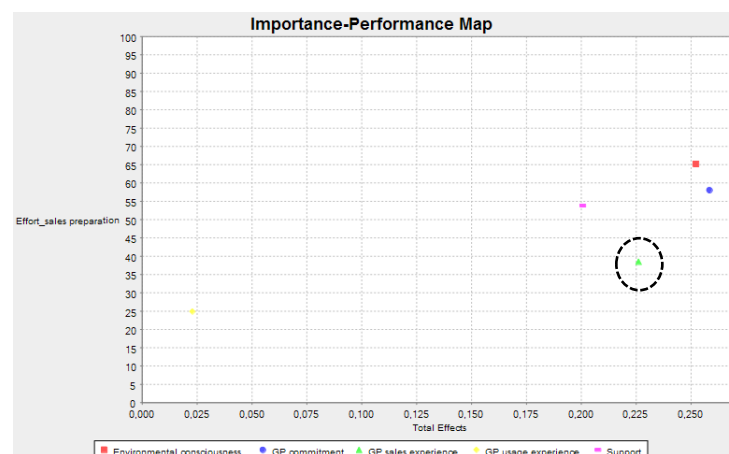
Figure 6-1: IPM for effort directed toward sales preparation, initial model

- **Offer green demo products to increase salesperson's green product usage experience**

A salesperson's decision to put more effort into closing the deal for the green product compared to grey products is especially influenced by their level of green product usage experience. As can be seen in Figure 6-2, salesperson's green product usage experience scores high on importance but very low on performance. This finding indicates that suppliers should offer enough demo products and make it appealing to salespersons to use the green product. For example, the supplier could make a photo contest by challenging salespersons to make a picture of themselves when using the green product under extreme or special conditions. Challenging salespersons to use the green product is important since our research indicates that most salespersons have low usage experiences with the green product.

Figure 6-2: IPM for effort directed to closing the deal, initial model

6.3   Limitations and future research

This study attempts to shed light on factors influencing salesperson's decision to put more effort in selling green products in comparison to grey products. Despite the promising findings, highlighting a number of limitations and suggestions for future research appears to be important to judge these findings on their value.
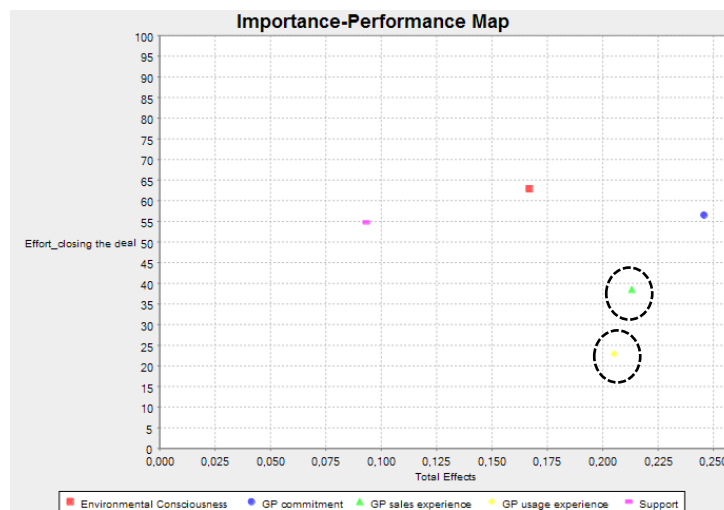
First, we conducted this exploratory research on one type of high involvement green product in a B2C context which result in limiting the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, because our conceptual model was tested using data from the same source and rater, common method bias might be present. Future research could use different B2B and B2C settings, different green product types and sales records instead of self-reported sales data.

Second, although we include country as a control variable, we did not take the geographical position of the dealership into account. For example, salesperson's working in rural areas might have fewer opportunities to close the deal (i.e. low demand) compared to metropole areas.

Third, only few antecedents of salesperson's effort directed to sell the green product compared to grey products were investigated in this research. Future research could include other antecedents such as subjective norms and training.

Fourth, while this research takes mainly the perspective of the salesperson, it does not shed much light how sales managers might influence salesperson's effort in selling green products. Future research could take different effects into account such as manager's commitment and manager's green product usage experience.

Fifth, this research has not investigated how managers could motivate their salespeople to balance the sales of green and grey products. Findings in these areas could add to the research domain of ambidextrous product-selling strategies (i.e. simultaneous focus on the sale of existing and new products) (van der Borgh et al., 2017).

Sixth, future research could investigate why environmental conscious salespeople seem to put much effort into sales preparation but not in closing the sales deal. For example, the impact of reinforcing the green aspect by the salespeople on green product sales can be investigated. More specifically, reactance theory could be explored. Reactance occurs when an individual feels that someone (i.e. salesperson) is taking away their choices or limiting the range of alternatives (e.g. solely focus on green products) (Johnstone & Tan, 2015).

Another fruitful follow-up analysis could be to discover why salespeople with a high levels of usage experience seem to be more inclined to close the deal but not to put effort into sales preparation.

In conclusion, this master thesis project addresses an important issue facing green product suppliers and sales managers: how to increase salesperson's effort to sell green products. By examining the relative influence of motivations, abilities and opportunities, we shed light on how and where managers should devote more resources. For scholars interested in green product sales, we addressed an under researched area worthy for further study: the critical role of salespeople in selling green products and how salesperson's intention to sell those products are influenced.

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Appendices

Appendix A: measurement scales

Tabel 0-1: Overview measurement scales

Motivation
- ***Commitment (α= .77)***
  I feel emotionally attached to the success of this green product.
  Achieving objectives for this green product has a great deal of personal meaning to me.
  I enjoy discussing this green product with other salespeople.
  I feel a strong sense of duty to ensure the success of this green product.
  I would be willing to make further investment of my time and energy to support this green product.
- ***Environmental consciousness (α= .71)***
  When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences.***
  Humans are severely abusing the environment.
  Despite our special abilities humans are still subject to the laws of nature.
  The so-called "ecological crisis" facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated.***
  The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset.
  If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe.

Opportunities
- ***Supplier's support (α=.88)***
  The supplier acts in a responsive manner when we forward customer complaints about the green product.
  The knowledge of the supplier assists us in selling green products.
  The supplier is helpful in solving problems of customers.
  The quality of service delivered by the supplier toward salespeople is good.
  The supplier provides good feedback on how to sell green products.

Abilities
- ***Green product selling experience***
  For how many years have you sold the green product?
- ***Green product usage experience (α=.90)****
  I use the green product for work purposes.
  I use the green product for private purposes.
  I charge the green product at home/work.
  I charge the green product at a public charging station.

Behavior
- ***Effort – sales preparation (α= .85)***
  Compared to non-green products, I have for the sale of this green product…
  … put more effort to sell it to my customers.
  … did more research to identify customer needs.
  … spent more time answering customer questions.
  … had more contacts with my customers.
- ***Effort – closing the deal***
  Looking back at your sales within the last three months; how many personalized offers, compared to non-green products, have you made for the green product (in %)?

Controls

- **General sales experience**

  For how many years have you been selling cars?

- **Green product incentives ***

  It makes financial sense for me to focus on selling the green product.***

  Overall, I receive a larger financial incentive for selling the green product than for selling non-green products.

  My pay increases are based on how well I sell the green product.***

- **Outcome control** *(α=.77)**

  My manager…

  … decides who's good by looking strictly at each salesperson's bottom line.

  … only values tangible results.

  … does not care what I do as long as I perform.

- **Behavior control** *(α=.90)**

  My manager…

  … makes sure I know what to do and how to do it.

  …frequently asks me for information on how I'm doing.

  …gives explicit direction to me.

*Measured on a 5 point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"

** Measured on a 6 point Likert scale form "never" to "always"

***Item deleted

Appendix B: Outlier detection
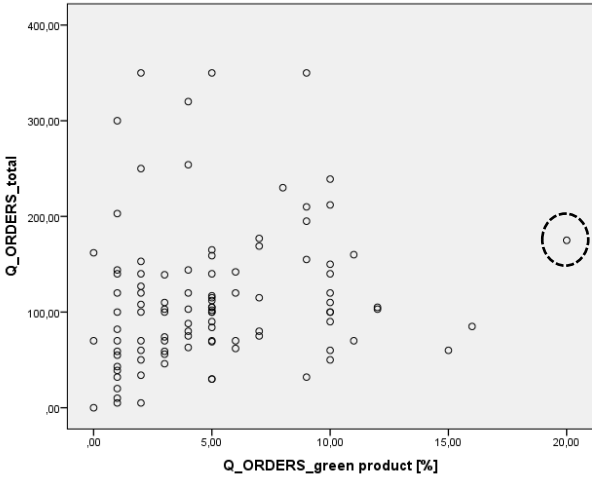
Figure 0-1: green product offers vs. total product offers

Appendix C: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	\ Component 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
EFFORT_1			,732							
EFFORT_2			,855							
EFFORT_3			,777							
EFFORT_4			,811							
COMMIT_1						,777				
COMMIT_2						,674				
COMMIT_3						,703				
COMMIT_4									,737	
COMMIT_5									,747	
GP_EXP_USE_1		,961								
GP_EXP_USE_2		,938								
GP_EXP_USE_3		,826								
GP_EXP_USE_4		,752								
SUPP_GP_1	,838									
SUPP_GP_2	,786									
SUPP_GP_3	,809									
SUPP_GP_4	,881									
SUPP_GP_5	,763									
INCENT_GP_1								,520		
INCENT_GP_2								,856		
INCENT_GP_3								,825		
ENV_CON_1										,850
ENV_CON_2					,778					
ENV_CON_3					,568					,351
rec_ENV_CON_4					,461	-,500				
ENV_CON_5					,684					
ENV_CON_6					,714					
BCON_1				,860						
BCON_2				,872						
BCON_3				,928						
OCON_1							,724			
OCON_2							,866			
OCON_3							,817			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 13 iterations.

Figure 0-2: Rotated component matrix of constructs

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4,871	14,759	14,759	4,871	14,759	14,759
2	3,776	11,441	26,201			
3	3,074	9,316	35,517			
4	2,729	8,269	43,786			
5	2,322	7,036	50,822			
6	2,143	6,494	57,316			
7	1,605	4,864	62,180			
8	1,547	4,687	66,866			
9	1,143	3,463	70,330			
10	1,110	3,363	73,693			
11	,950	2,879	76,572			
12	,793	2,403	78,975			
13	,721	2,185	81,160			
14	,653	1,979	83,139			
15	,600	1,820	84,958			
16	,541	1,639	86,597			
17	,503	1,524	88,122			
18	,499	1,512	89,634			
19	,469	1,421	91,054			
20	,382	1,156	92,211			
21	,367	1,111	93,322			
22	,337	1,021	94,343			
23	,286	,866	95,208			
24	,257	,779	95,988			
25	,232	,703	96,690			
26	,219	,664	97,355			
27	,175	,530	97,885			
28	,174	,526	98,411			
29	,151	,457	98,868			
30	,137	,416	99,284			
31	,111	,337	99,620			
32	,086	,262	99,882			
33	,039	,118	100,000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Appendix D: Discriminant validity – Fornell Larcker Criterion

Table 0-2: Validity- Dependent Variable sales preparation

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	AVE-values
1. Effort (sales preparation)	**.83**					.67
2. Commitment	.37	**.71**				.51
3. Environmental consciousness	.33	.15	**.72**			.52
4. Usage experience	.13	.30	.04	**.89**		.77
5. Supplier's support	.19	.07	-.05	.01	**.82**	.67

Table 0-3: Validity – Dependent Variable closing the deal

Variable	1	2	3	4	AVE-values
1. Commitment	**.71**				.51
2. Environmental consciousness	.14	**.70**			.49
3. Usage experience	.30	.04	**.88**		.78
4. Supplier's support	.07	.04	.02	**.81**	.65

Appendix E: Skewness, and kurtosis values of key measures

Table 0-4:Means , Standard Deviations, skewness - and kurtosis values of Key Measures

| Measure	n	min	max	M	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Effort - sales preparation	95	2.00	5.00	3.38	.68	.16	.25	.16	.49
Effort - closing the deal	95	0	15	4.88	3.40	.68	.25	-.31	.49
Commitment	95	2.0	5.00	3.27	.60	.18	.25	-.37	.49
Environmental Consciousness	95	2.50	5.00	3.57	.56	.49	.25	-.16	.49
Sales experience	95	0	9.00	3.45	2.07	.75	.25	.09	.49
Usage experience	95	1.00	6.00	2.24	1.31	1.08	.25	.37	.49
Supplier's support	95	1.00	4.8	3.18	.66	-.49	.25	.40	.49

Appendix F: G* Power test
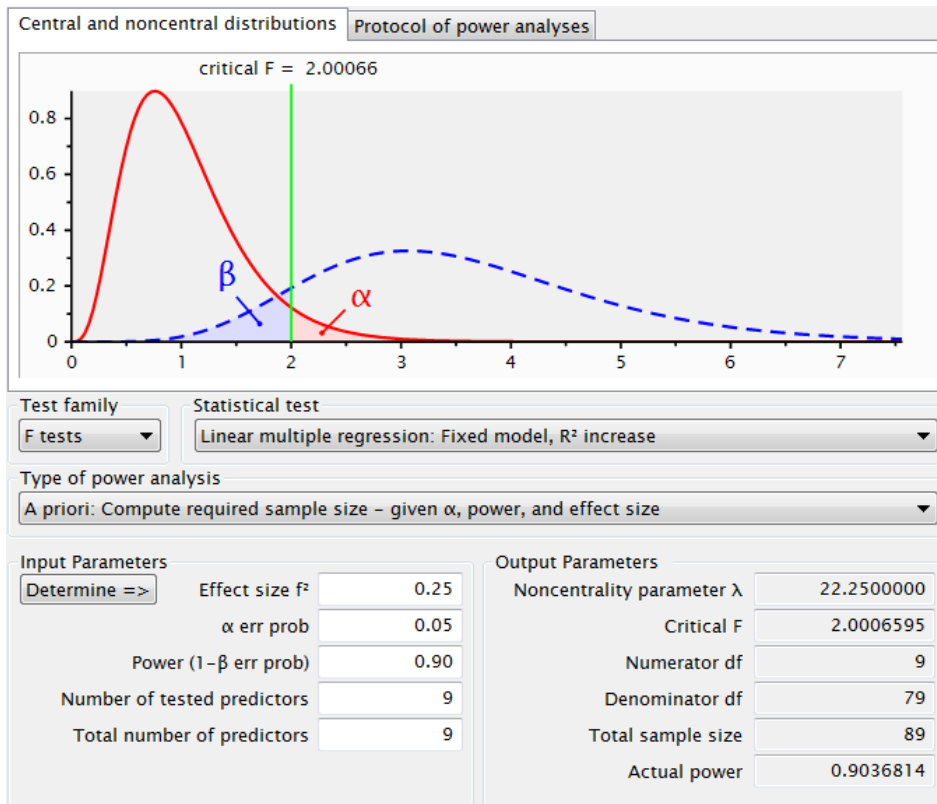
Figure 0-3: Output G*Power test

Appendix G: F square values

Table 0-5: path coefficient and f^2 values - Dependent Variable sales preparation

Paths			Path coefficients	f^2
Commitment	➜	Effort (sales preparation)	.26	.08
Environmental Consciousness	➜	Effort (sales preparation)	.25	.08
Sales Experience	➜	Effort (sales preparation)	.23	.06
Support	➜	Effort (sales preparation)	.20	.06

Table 0-6: path coefficient and f^2 values - Dependent Variable closing the deal

Paths			Path coefficients	f^2
Commitment	➜	Effort (closing the deal)	.25	.07
Sales Experience	➜	Effort (closing the deal)	.21	.06
Usage Experience	➜	Effort (closing the deal)	.21	.05

Appendix H: Post hoc analyses

1. Controls

Table 0-7: VIF scores; Dependent variable: sales preparation, controls included

Variable	VIF
GP commitment	1.42
Environmental consciousness	1.35
GP sales experience	1.42
GP usage experience	1.19
Supplier's GP support	1.03
Country	1.27
General sales experience	1.47
GP incentives	1.09

Table 0-8: VIF scores; Dependent variable: closing the deal, controls included

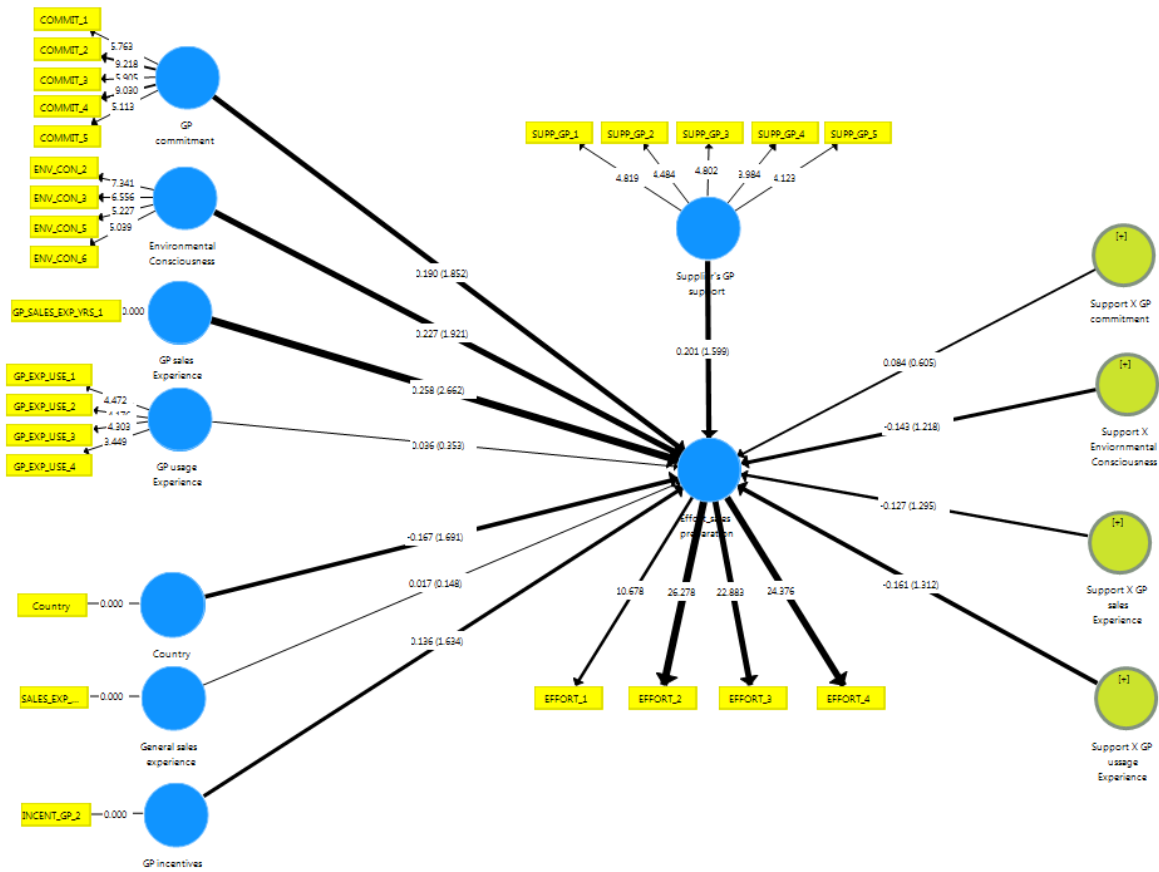| Variable	VIF
GP commitment	1.35
Environmental consciousness	1.26
GP sales experience	1.38
GP usage experience	1.18
Supplier's GP support	1.04
Country	1.34
General sales experience	1.43
GP incentives	1.09

Figure 0-4: SmartPLS output; adding control variables R^2 (effort-sales preparation) =.36

Table 0-9: Overview path coefficients; adding control variables R^2 (effort-sales preparation) =.36

Paths Modelled			Coefficient	t-value	Hypothesis
GP commitment	**→ H1$_a$(1)**	**Effort-sales preparation**	**.19***	**1.85**	**Marginally Supported**
Environmental consciousness	**→ H1$_b$(1)**	**Effort- sales preparation**	**.23***	**1.92**	**Marginally Supported**
GP sales experience	**→ H2$_a$(1)**	**Effort- sales preparation**	**.26***	**2.66**	**Supported**
GP usage Experience	→ H2$_b$(1)	Effort- sales preparation	.04	.35	Not Supported
Support* GP commitment	→ H3$_a$(1)	Effort- sales preparation	.08	.61	Not supported
Support*Environmental consciousness	→ H3$_a$(1)	Effort- sales preparation	-.14	1.22	Not supported
Support* GP sales experience	→ H3$_b$(1)	Effort- sales preparation	-.13	1.30	Not supported
Support* GP usage experience	→ H3$_b$(1)	Effort- sales preparation	-.16	1.31	Not supported

Significance levels: ***$p < .01$,**$p < .05$, * $p < .10$ (t-values respectively > 2.58, > 1.96, > 1.65)

Figure 0-5: SmartPLS output; adding control variables R^2 (effort-closing the deal) =.28

Tabel 0-10: Overview of path coefficients; adding control variables R^2 (effort-closing the deal) =.28

Paths Modelled			Coefficient	t-value	Hypothesis
GP commitment	$\rightarrow H1_a(1)$	**Effort-closing the deal**	**.22****	**2.29**	**Supported**
Environmental consciousness	$\rightarrow H1_b(1)$	Effort-closing the deal	.17	1.20	Not Supported
GP sales experience	$\rightarrow H2_a(1)$	**Effort-closing the deal**	**.19****	**1.96**	**Supported**
GP usage Experience	$\rightarrow H2_b(1)$	**Effort-closing the deal**	**.22****	**2.12**	**Supported**
Support* GP commitment	$\rightarrow H3_a(1)$	Effort-closing the deal	.03	.24	Not supported
Support*Environmental consciousness	$\rightarrow H3_a(1)$	Effort-closing the deal	-.07	.45	Not supported
Support* GP sales experience	$\rightarrow H3_b(1)$	Effort-closing the deal	-.14	1.25	Not supported
Support* GP usage experience	$\rightarrow H3_b(1)$	Effort-closing the deal	-.11	.79	Not supported

Significance levels: ***$p < .01$, **$p < .05$, * $p < .10$ (t-values respectively > 2.58, > 1.96, > 1.65)
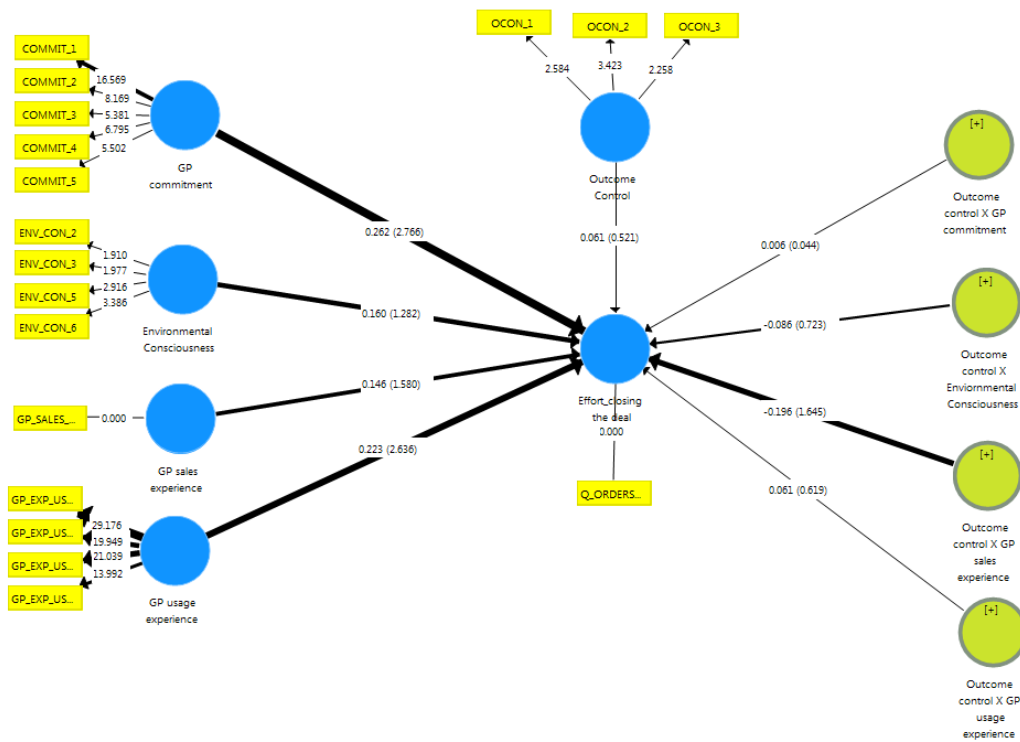
2. Moderating effect

Figure 0-6: SmartPLS output; Moderating effect Outcome control R^2 (effort-closing the deal) =.28

Table 0-11: Overview of path coefficients; Moderating effect Outcome control R^2 (effort-closing the deal) =.28

Paths Modelled			Coefficient	t-value
GP Commitment	➔	**Effort-closing the deal**	**.26 *****	**2.77**
Environmental consciousness	➔	Effort-closing the deal	.16	1.28
Sales Experience	➔	Effort-closing the deal	.15	1.58
GP usage Experience	➔	**Effort-closing the deal**	**.22*****	**2.64**
Outcome control * GP commitment	➔	Effort-closing the deal	.01	.04
Outcome control *Environmental consciousness	➔	Effort-closing the deal	-.09	.72
Outcome control * GP sales experience	➔	**Effort-closing the deal**	**-.20 ***	**1.65**
Outcome control * GP usage experience	➔	Effort-closing the deal	-.06	.62

Significance levels: ***p < .01,**p < .05, * *p* < .10 (t-values respectively > 2.58, > 1.96, > 1.65)