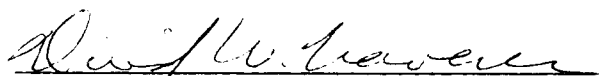


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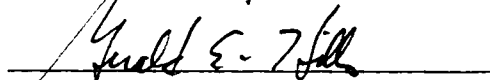
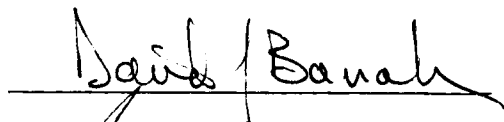


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We have read this dissertation
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Vice Chancellor

Graduate Studies and Research

COMMUNICATION STYLE IN THE CUSTOMER-SALESPERSON
INTERACTION PROCESS

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Business Administration
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Kaylene Carol Williams

December 1980

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DEDICATED TO

SWAMI MUKTANANDA PARAMAHANSA

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ABSTRACT

The communication which occurs between customers and salespeople is of primary concern to retail businesses. However, minimal attention has been given to the communication aspects of the customer-salesperson interaction process.

This research focusses on the customer-salesperson interaction process via a communication perspective. In essence, communication consists of four elements: content, code, communication rules, and communication style. Content consists of what is said, while the code is the verbal and/or nonverbal form in which the content is relayed. Communication rules bind the code and content so that common meanings can be shared between the customer and the salesperson.

As the first three elements occur over time, they become patterned or stylized by influences within the customer and salesperson environments. As such, communication style is defined as an individual's characteristic tendency to choose particular patterns of communication. For example, a customer or a salesperson may be task-oriented and use communication patterns which stress the effective and efficient completion of a job. Or, a customer or salesperson may be self-oriented; i.e., focussing exclusively on himself, personal problems, and personal ego needs. Additionally, a customer or salesperson may be interaction-oriented, in which case he is friendly, cordial, and concerned with the other person.

This research conceptualizes and operationalizes the phenomenon of communication style. In accordance, a field study was conducted to

examine the presence and importance of communication style. This study reveals that there are mixes of communication styles rather than pure uses of either one style or another. Three style-mix groups of customers were isolated: (1) the "Interactors" who exhibited a high task orientation, a low self orientation, and a high interaction orientation; (2) the "Task Completers" who exhibited a high task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation; and (3) the "Browsers" who exhibited a low task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation. In addition, three style-mix groups of salespeople were isolated: (1) the "Super Sellers" who exhibited a high task orientation, a low self orientation, and a high interaction orientation; (2) the "Moderate Sellers" who exhibited a moderate task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation; and (3) the "Inactive Sellers" who exhibited a low task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation.

Once isolated, these style mixes were subsequently tested for their effects on sales, communication results, and the customer's evaluations. In particular, these tests reveal that some style mixes are more effective in terms of sales. For example, an individual whose style mix is high in task orientation typically has a greater number of sales and a greater mean sales value than the individual who does not have a high task orientation. These results suggest that a high task-oriented salesperson may be very beneficial to the retail store, whereas a low or moderate task-oriented salesperson may not be as effective in terms of sales.

An examination of the style-mix combinations in each dyad also suggests this finding. In particular, it is not necessary for customers and salespeople to have identical style mixes. However, it is necessary for at least one individual in the dyad to be highly task-oriented as well as personable and friendly in communicating.

As an outcome of the study results, future research efforts are suggested with regard to communication style and the customer-salesperson interaction process. In addition, given the neophyte stage of conceptualization and operationalization of the communication style variable, marketing management implications are discussed from a conjectural viewpoint.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The most direct, as well as most expensive, contact that the majority of firms have with the customer is through the salesperson or, more specifically, through interpersonal communication with the salesperson. Subsequently, the effectiveness of the customer-salesperson interaction is critical to the success of these firms.

Traditionally, research has focussed on the salesperson, be it his physical appearance, abilities, and/or social or psychological makeup (Miner, 1962; Dunnette and Kirchner, 1960; Harrell, 1960; Evans, 1963; Stafford and Greer, 1965; Cotham, 1968; and Scheibelhut and Albaum, 1973). While this focus has been useful, it has ignored half the picture by excluding the role of customer.

More recently, researchers have examined this interaction as a process involving both the salesperson and the customer (Bearden, 1969; Willett and Pennington, 1968; Levy and Zaltman, 1975; Spiro, Perreault, and Reynolds, 1976; Wilson, 1976; and Woodside and Taylor, 1978). Both participants are viewed as being active in the interaction, although to varying degrees. Although these studies have recognized the importance of the two-way nature of the interaction process, only a limited number of studies have actually investigated the two-way interaction process itself.

The essence of any interaction is the communication which takes place between those individuals who are interacting. This involves more than just the content of the interaction. It also includes

the way in which the content is expressed (i.e., verbal and nonverbal communication). However, in their review of the customer-salesperson interaction literature, Capon, Holbrook, and Hulbert (1977) pointed out that relatively few individuals have utilized a communication perspective to examine customer-salesperson interactions (Chapple and Donald, 1947; Willett and Pennington, 1966; Pennington, 1968; Hulbert and Capon, 1973; and Olshavsky, 1973). Such a perspective considers not only what is said, but how it is said. In terms of a sales presentation, this perspective is concerned with the content of the sales presentation as well as its delivery.

In summary, most of the past research has failed to focus on both the customer and salesperson. In addition, few studies have assessed the interaction from a communication perspective. This study examines the communication between the customer and the salesperson in an actual selling situation. It further focusses on a specific aspect of the communication between them, namely, their communication style.

I. COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNICATION STYLE

Communication has four elements: content, code, communication rules, and communication style. Content consists of the subject matter of the communication or functional, social-organizational, situational, emotional, and curiosity utility as specified by Sheth (1976). Code consists of the verbal (Mortensen, 1972) and nonverbal (Eisenberg and Smith, 1971; Bonoma and Felder, 1977) forms of the content. The communication rules bind the content with the specific code to relay a specific message. As the communication occurs over

time, the balance of content, code, and communication rules becomes patterned or stylized by influences within the customer and salesperson environments.

Communication style is defined as an individual's characteristic tendency to choose particular patterns of communication. For example, some salespeople may display a stiff and matter-of-fact manner, while others may be more loose and free in their interactions with the customer. Customers may also choose particular patterns of communication. For example, some customers may be highly interactive with the salesperson while others may be rude and inconsiderate because they care only about completing their shopping.

Style is a critical variable in the communication effectiveness between the customer and salesperson. It is important because it may strengthen or draw attention from the material being presented. In effect, style may increase or reduce attention, comprehension, and acceptance.

Three marketing studies have indirectly studied communication style. Hayes (1978) investigated role requirements and expectations and found that the salesperson should have a large role repertoire. Indirectly, style would be a function of the large role repertoire. The second marketing study looked at the salesperson from the vantage of self-other orientation (Scheibelhut and Albaum, 1973). Essentially, these two orientations are related to two different types of style. A third study by Stafford and Greer (1965) examined the characteristics of the salesperson (i.e., "satisfactorily friendly and eager" and "overly aggressive in dealing with customers"). Indirectly, these kinds of characteristics can be viewed in terms of style.

Although the marketing discipline has paid little attention to communication style, studies in the area of small-group leadership have examined the style variable. In general, this research has focussed on three styles of leadership: authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. The authoritarian leader tended to be restricted, leader-centered, and directive, while the democratic leader was permissive, group-oriented, and participatory. The laissez-faire leader followed the group and just allowed things to happen as they occurred. While this literature provided an interesting conceptualization and useful research on the distinctions among authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire styles of leadership, it did not focus on style in terms of communication.

Sheth (1976) suggested an interesting conceptualization of customer-salesperson communication style (based on earlier work by Bass, 1960, 1967). In this framework, style could be task-oriented, interaction-oriented, or self-oriented. The task-oriented style of interaction was highly goal-oriented and purposeful. The individual using this style was concerned with efficiency and minimizing time, cost, and effort. The interaction-oriented style was more personalized and social even to the extent of the individual's ignoring the task at hand. The self-oriented style reflected a person's preoccupation with himself in an interaction situation. This individual tended to be more concerned about his own welfare and had less empathy for the other person.

It should be noted that Sheth's conceptualization was the only conceptualization of style as related to personal selling and it had not been empirically tested. On the other hand, it did seem to have some face validity. For example, a task-oriented salesperson would probably have a "matter-of-fact" attitude and be structured in his presentation.

He might also seem to be concerned with making the sale. A salesperson who is interaction-oriented would be concerned with being friendly and with trying to foster a strong personal relationship with the other person. A salesperson who is interaction-oriented might socialize with the customers rather than doing his job and getting the sale. He might, in fact, spend too much time socializing and not enough time getting the job done. A self-oriented salesperson might air his personal difficulties, try to impress the other person, and try to dominate the interaction. In fact, he might be so interested in himself that he fails to empathize with the customer and, accordingly, could lose potential sales. The customer might also exhibit style. For example, the customer might be leisurely shopping and, consequently, interacting on a social level. On the other hand, the customer might be task-oriented and fail to appreciate the salesperson who wants to share his or her latest jokes. The self-oriented customer would be interested in merchandise which gives status or esteem and the salesperson who actively compliments his taste.

Style is a fundamental variable in the customer-salesperson interaction but it is a variable about which little is known. As Anderson (1972) noted, the effectiveness of different styles has been assumed more than proven. As of yet there has been little research to evaluate the impact of communication style on the interaction process. In fact, the question of communication style in the customer-salesperson dyad has for the most part been ignored. As such, this research utilizes the framework suggested by Sheth to test the presence and effect of communication style in the customer-salesperson interaction.

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Very little is known about the presence and impact of communication style on the customer-salesperson interaction. For example, it is not known whether particular styles are more or less effective than other styles. In specific, given the selling situation, are there some styles which are more or less compatible with another person's style? Additionally, does similarity or compatibility in the communication styles of the customer and salesperson lead to better communication and greater sales effectiveness?

Inherent in the problem of measuring the presence and impact of communication style is the problem of structuring the research so that (1) the perceptions and behaviors of both the customer and the salesperson can be measured, and (2) the results will be valid in representing an actual selling situation.

III. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The objectives of this study are grouped into three categories. The first category consists of those objectives which deal with the measurement of style. The second category concerns an assessment of the importance of style in the customer-salesperson interaction. The final objective concerns the importance of style similarity and compatibility.

Style Measurement

This study attempts to develop scales to measure the extent to which the customer and the salesperson utilize specific styles. These scales are based on the framework suggested by Sheth (1976), i.e.,

interaction-oriented, self-oriented, and task-oriented. Also, an attempt is made to classify the customer and the salesperson according to the style or combinations of style which best characterize each individual in a particular sales interaction. Additionally, this research explores whether the use of a particular style by the salesperson or customer is related to personal variables such as age, sex, marital status, education, income, experience, predisposition to purchase, affective state or mood, compensation plan, and purchase importance.

Style Importance

Secondly, this research examines whether or not any one style or mix of styles is related to the effectiveness of the interaction. In this regard, it assesses the relationship between communication style and the sales results of the interaction, namely the buy/no buy decision and the amount of sales. Also, the evaluations of the salesperson, product, store, and sales presentation which affect future sales are assessed in a corollary study of a subsample of stores. In addition, the importance of communication style on the communication results of the interaction is examined.

Style Similarity and Compatibility

Finally, this study examines the issues of style similarity and compatibility. It determines whether similarity or compatibility in style is related to greater communication and sales effectiveness. These similar or compatible dyads are further examined for other similarities and/or differences.

IV. CONTRIBUTIONS

Communication style is an essential variable for understanding communication effectiveness in the customer-salesperson interaction. However, little research has been done on this variable. This study is the first known attempt to empirically investigate the style variable. As such, this research provides a greater knowledge of the importance of style. It specifically tests the impact of style on sales results.

The examination of the style variable as based on the proposed model can have useful implications for sales management. A better understanding of style can lead to improved sales effectiveness. It is paramount for management to understand the importance of communication style in the customer-salesperson interaction. This includes not only what is said but how it is said. The study of style can provide a basis for teaching the salesperson to communicate more effectively. These improvements could lessen misunderstandings while potentially increasing initial and repeat purchases. A more thorough understanding and attention to the use of communication style may provide criteria for selecting, training, and evaluating salespeople. Style may be a variable along with physical appearance, abilities, and/or social or psychological makeup which can be useful to the manager. If this study demonstrates that similarity and compatibility contribute to the effectiveness of interactions, then marketers should begin to consider the implications of these findings in the selection and training of their salespeople.

Finally, the model of the customer-salesperson interaction process which was developed from a thorough review of the literature

provides a more complete picture of the process occurring between the customer and the salesperson. This model integrates a sales process model with a consumer behavior model via a communication perspective. As such, this model can provide a basis for communication among researchers and practitioners' from a variety of areas. This model can also be used as a guide for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE CUSTOMER-SALESPERSON

INTERACTION PROCESS

The personal selling process has typically been analyzed from the perspective of the salesperson. This focus assumes that the outcome of the sale is dependent upon characteristics and abilities of the salesperson alone, and that the salesperson is able to control the outcome of the sale by his or her selling skills, traits, and attributes. In this framework, the customer is assigned a passive, mechanistic role.

The use of a dual focus in analyzing the sales process is a relatively recent approach. Several authors have proposed models which focus on the interaction between the customer and salesperson; namely, the customer-salesperson dyad. However, these efforts have typically focused on the static elements within the customer-salesperson dyad and have often failed to view adequately the customer-salesperson interaction as a dynamic process. Nonetheless, these models have suggested variables and relationships which are important to the understanding of the customer-salesperson interaction process.

The following literature review is divided into four basic sections. The first section reviews the current customer-salesperson interaction models. The second section assesses the strengths and weaknesses of these models. As an outgrowth of the second section,

the third section presents a proposed customer-salesperson interaction process model. Each of the elements of this proposed model is then described and reviewed in terms of the literature. The fourth section presents a summary focus of the variables in the customer-salesperson interaction process model which are used to test the presence and effect of communication style.

I. PREVIOUS MODELS

The customer-salesperson interaction process has been modeled in several different forms: (1) Willett and Pennington, 1966; (2) Bearden, 1969; (3) Levy and Zaltman, 1975; (4) Wilson, 1976; (5) Sheth, 1976; and (6) Spiro, Perreault, and Reynolds, 1976.

The Willett and Pennington (1966) model (Figure 1) recognized that the customer-salesperson interaction is dyadic in nature and is contingent on both the customer's and the salesperson's characteristics and abilities. This model also presented a reasonably detailed synthesis of the relationships among the variables ascribed to the customer-salesperson interaction process. The model consisted of six elements: preshopping purchase intentions, customer characteristics and influences, salesman characteristics and influences, interaction, transactions, and outcomes. The authors suggested that the interaction between these two individuals depends on how each views the other and the subsequent reactions. However, this process was simply labeled "interaction," with no further decomposition into sub-elements. The Willett and Pennington

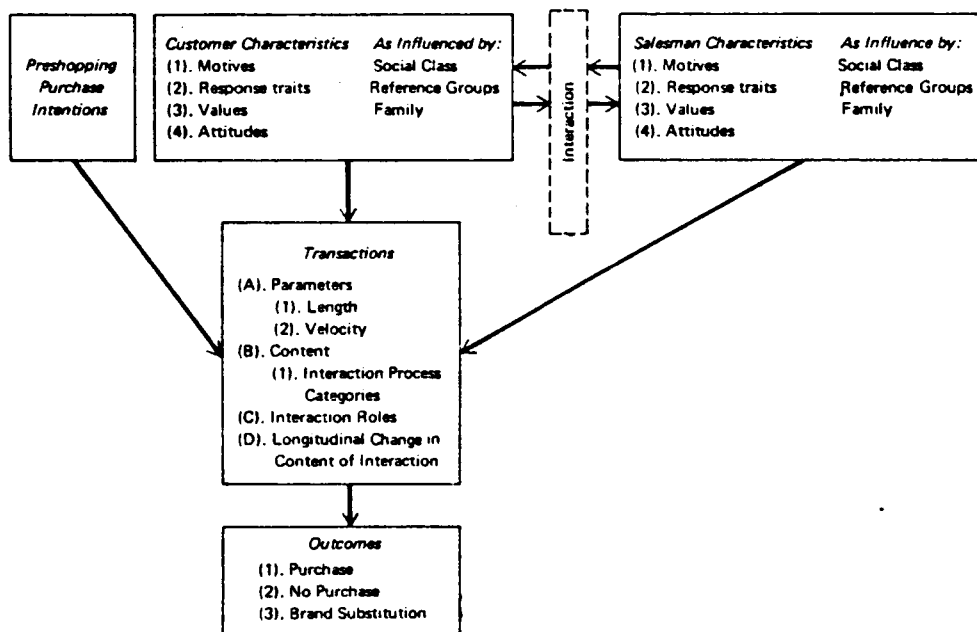


Figure 1. Willett and Pennington model.

Source: Willett, R.P., and A. Pennington (1966), "Customer and Salesmen: The Anatomy of Choice and Influence in a Retail Setting," Proceedings of the American Marketing Association, Chicago, Illinois: American Marketing Association, 598-616. Figure reproduced from Engel, J.F., D.T. Kollat, and K.D. Blackwell (1973), Consumer Behavior, Second Edition, Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden Press, 501.

model defined transactions in terms of (1) length and velocity parameters, (2) content of interaction process categories, (3) interaction roles, and (4) longitudinal change in content of interaction. The outcome of the transaction included purchase, no purchase, or brand substitution. The outcome was dependent on the transaction which, in turn, was dependent on pre-shopping purchase intentions and the characteristics and influences of both the customer and salesperson.

The Bearden (1969) model (Figure 2) was an attempt at systematizing the author's impression of the decision process of an industrial salesman. However, the model could also be useful for analyzing consumer purchasing on a nonindustrial level. The model viewed the salesperson-prospect interaction as a relationship between three sub-processes: activation, strategy, and purchase decision. This could be seen as a basic stimulus-intervening variables-response (S-O-R) model, wherein the stimuli (termed "activation") activated the intervening process of interaction strategy and resulted in a purchase decision or response. According to Bearden (p. 193), a strategy can be analyzed in terms of positive forces and resistance forces. Positive forces

. . . emanate from the efforts of the salesman to bring about a favorable purchase decision while resistance forces are those emanating from the prospect and which correspond to a barrier or impediment to a favorable purchase decision. Both sets of forces may arise from the needs and abilities of the prospect or salesperson, or from impersonal aspects of the situation.

According to Bearden, the salesperson will bring about a decision to purchase when positive forces outweigh the resistance forces.

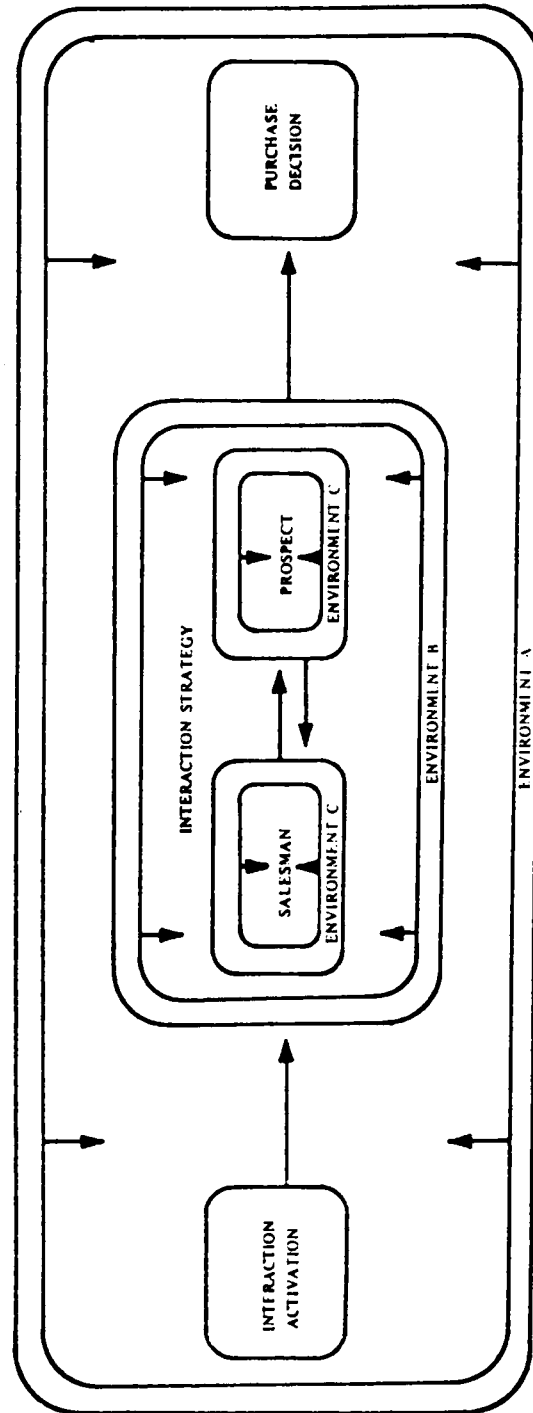


Figure 2. Bearden model.

Source: Bearden, J.H. (1969), "Decision Processes in Personal Selling," Southern Journal of Business, 4 (April), 192.

Bearden also developed an accompanying strategy analysis chart as a guide for moving the interaction to the point of achieving a favorable purchase decision. This model was an attempt to begin to manage the many variables which characterize the customer-salesperson interaction process.

The Levy and Zaltman (1975) model (Figure 3) portrayed the buyer-seller interaction in the context of marketing as a social system. Levy and Zaltman used exchange theory to discuss the dynamics of the processes and the phenomena of the relationships between the buyer and seller. In essence, the buyers and sellers brought certain traits and circumstances to the exchange situation which affected the rewards or the punishments exchanged. Buyer traits and circumstances included such variables as mass media exposure, achievement motivation, control beliefs, and cosmopolitanism. Sellers brought variables such as expertise, diagnostic skills, and communication skills (verbal-nonverbal) into the exchange. The suggested core exchange variables consisted of frequency of rewards, similarity of stimuli, likelihood of action, value of the reward, recency of last critical mass (i.e., is it sufficiently dated so that any satiation effects have worn off?), discrepancy between actual and expected rewards, and approving behavior. Liaison variables moderated the exchange process. These variables included social status, reciprocity, homophily, empathy, consensus-conflict, relative deprivation, and distributive justice. The authors stated that the value of the approach was in its aid as an identifier of specific variables and relationships between variables which the

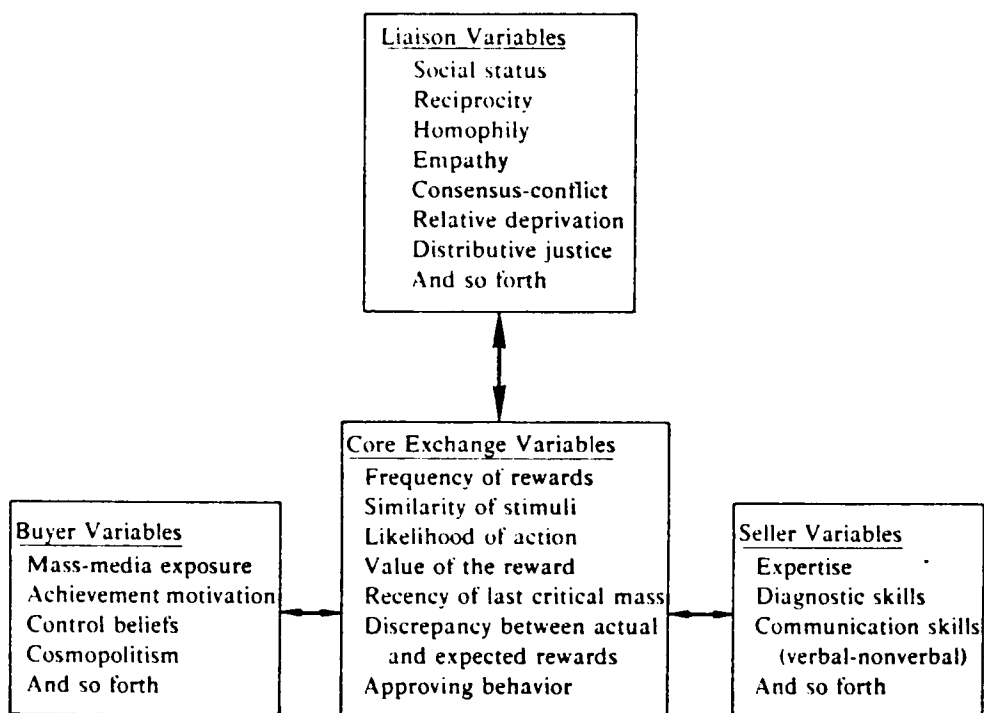


Figure 3. Levy and Zaltman model.

Source: Levy, S.J., and G. Zaltman (1975), Marketing, Society, and Conflict, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 37.

practitioner can either manipulate or adapt to other factors to create harmony in the exchange.

The Wilson (1976) model (Figure 4) depicted dyadic interaction as an exchange process. This model ordered the development of a long-term buyer-seller relationship rather than a "one-shot" selling situation. In this framework, the customer was attempting to secure a bundle of tangible and intangible attributes from the seller. This model focused on the changing relationship between the dyad members.

Wilson presented five stages in the dyadic sales process model:

1. Source legitimization--The salesperson was established as a legitimate and credible partner in the interaction.
2. Information exchange--The problem was defined and/or bound. As a consequence, the salesperson may have suggested an attribute package and have begun to position that package with respect to competition.
3. Attribute delineation--The bundle of attributes which was to be exchanged was developed by the dyad.
4. Attribute value negotiation--The dyad bargained over the contents of the attribute set and the exchange rate.
5. Relationship maintenance--The dyad maintained and built their relationship. The business relationship may have grown to a more personal business/friendship relationship.

Source
Legitimization

Information Exchange
Problem Identification

Attribute
Delineation

Attribute
Value
Negotiation

Relationship
Maintenance

Figure 4. Wilson model.

Source: Wilson, D.T. (1976), "Dyadic Interaction: An Exchange Process," Association for Consumer Research Proceedings, Cincinnati, Ohio: Association for Consumer Research, 396.

In a partial test of the model, Wilson and Bambic (1977) found that the stages overlap each other in that a number of activities can be occurring simultaneously. However, they also found that the basic stages must be met in order to move to the more advanced stages of the model.

The Sheth (1976) model (Figure 5) provided a comprehensive conceptualization of the buyer-seller interaction process. Sheth suggested that the effectiveness of the buyer-seller interaction was a function of two dimensions, content and style. Content was defined in terms of product-related utilities which the buyer desires and the seller offers (e.g., product benefits, product novelty, and product prestige). Style was defined as "the format, ritual, or mannerism which the buyer and the seller adapt in their interaction" (p. 385). Content and style, in turn, were determined by a number of personal, organizational, and product-related factors. Content was determined by such product-related factors as technology, competition, market motivations, and buyer-seller plans. Style, in turn, was likely to be determined by such personal factors as background, life style, and role orientation. Both style and content might be determined by organizational factors such as objectives and structure.

The Spiro, Perreault, and Reynolds (1976) model (Figure 6) emphasized the personal selling process of the industrial salesperson but was adaptable to that of the salesperson and ultimate consumer. The model was an integrative conceptual framework which provided a structure for analyzing the customer-salesperson relationship as a

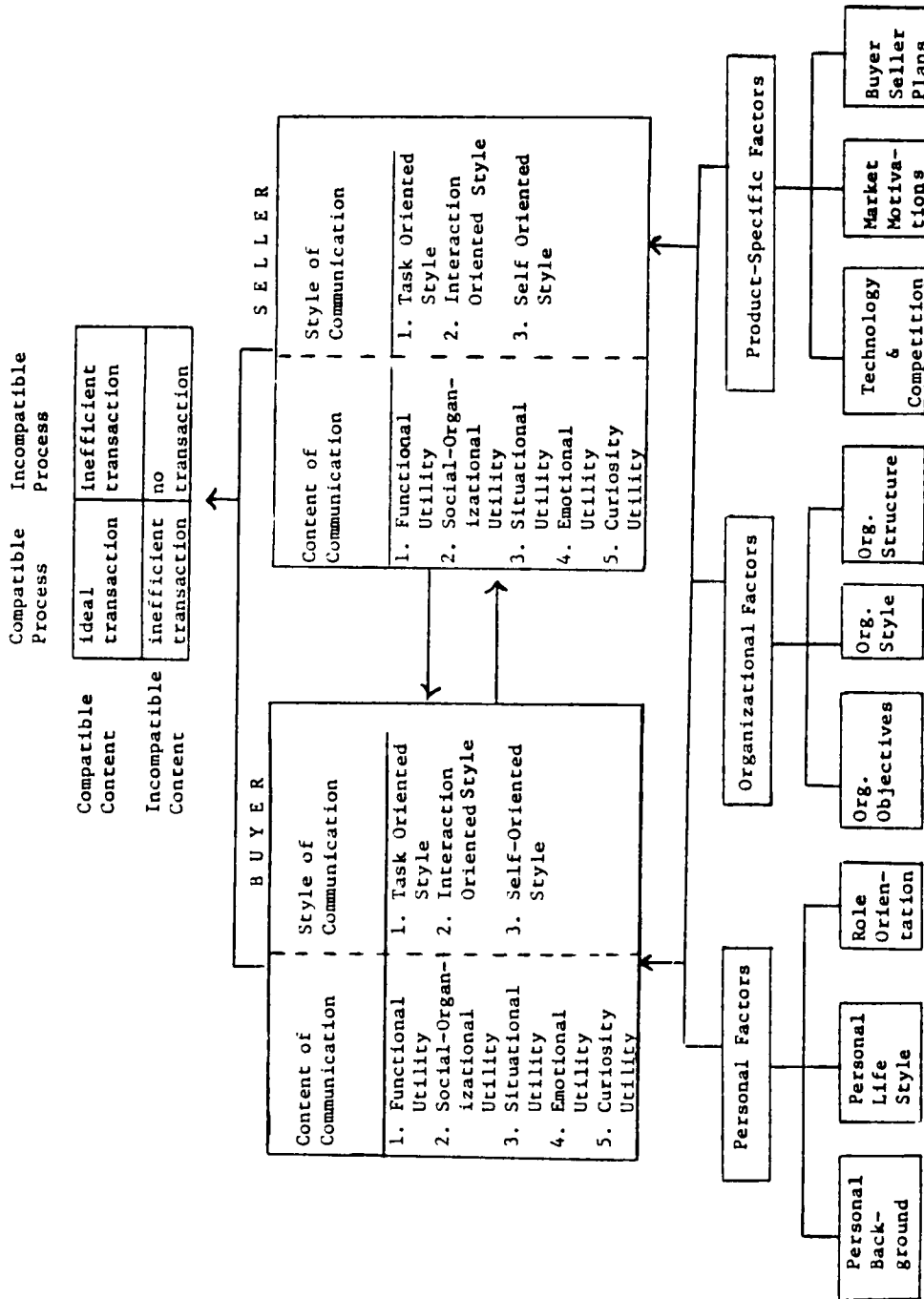


Figure 5. Sheth model.

Source: Sheth, J.N. (1976), "Buyer-Seller Interaction: A Conceptual Framework," Proceedings of the Association for Consumer Research, Cincinnati, Ohio: Association for Consumer Research, 383.

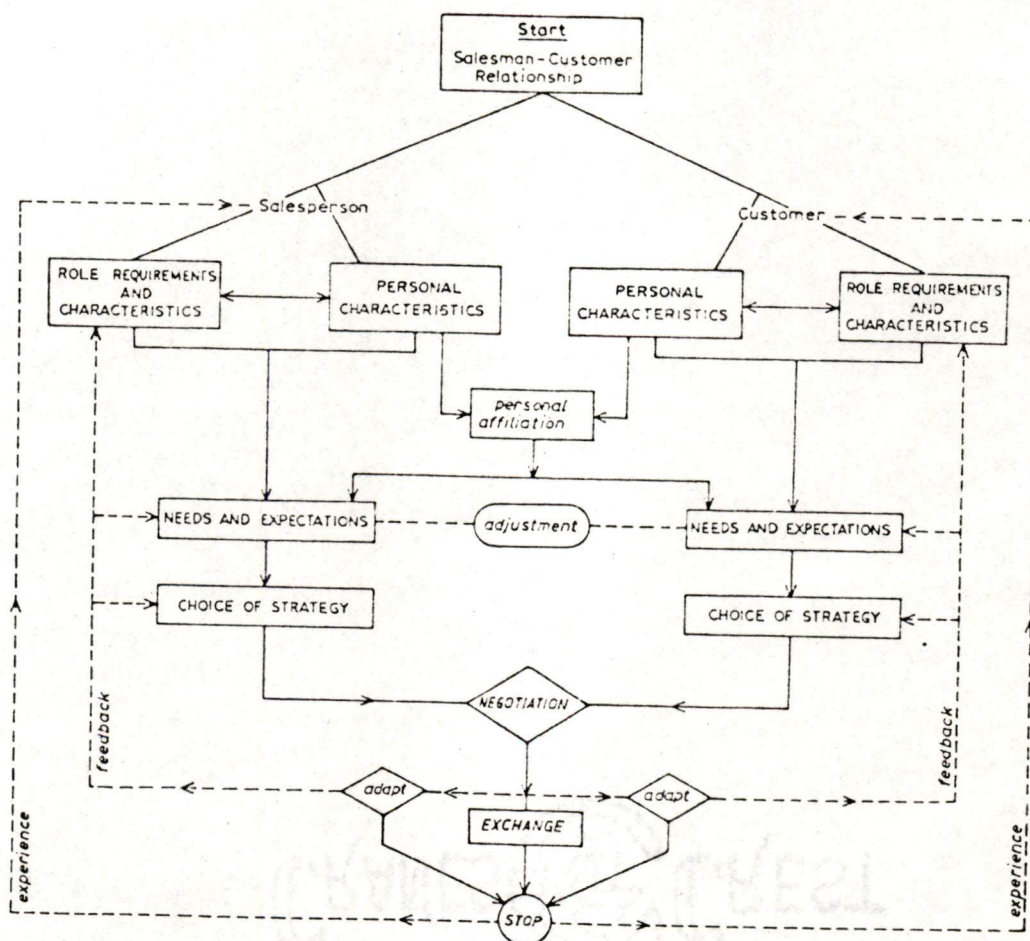


Figure 6. Spiro, Perreault, and Reynolds model.

Source: Spiro, R.L., W.D. Perreault, and F.D. Reynolds (1976), "The Personal Selling Process: A Critical Review and Model," Industrial Marketing Management, 5 (December), 353.

process rather than a series of isolated elements. It recognized that interaction is a dyadic relationship, with each individual actively functioning in the process. The model was symmetric in that each individual progressed through the same set of component parts in the process as delineated by the model. The sales process model of the salesperson-customer relationship had four major components: (1) personal characteristics, (2) role requirements and characteristics, (3) needs and expectations, and (4) interpersonal strategies. As seen in the model, both persons actively participated in the process. Each was influenced by personal characteristics such as personality, values, attitudes, and past experiences and role requirements (e.g., formal authority and organizational autonomy). These personal characteristics and role requirements may have aided or hindered the interaction occurring and the movement toward a purchase outcome. Needs and expectations were shaped by personal characteristics and role requirements. Based on knowledge of the other person's needs and expectations, these may be adjusted accordingly. A strategy based on needs and expectations was developed by each individual and was used in attempting to negotiate a favorable outcome. Feedback from an unsuccessful negotiation might be used to adapt the strategy and/or the needs and expectations. Once the negotiation was complete, the experience became input into future interactions.

II. CONTRIBUTIONS AND GAPS IN THE INTERACTION PROCESS LITERATURE

The previous models have significantly contributed to the study of the customer-salesperson dyad by focusing on the roles played by both the customer and the salesperson in interaction rather than considering the salesperson in isolation. They recognized that each individual was making decisions within his or her prospective role, and that interpersonal influence was a two-way process. The customer, like the salesperson, was actively involved in strategy development, negotiation, and bargaining.

Also, the models have prescribed variables and relationships between these variables which can aid the understanding of the interaction. For example, Bearden (1966) noted elements of activation, strategy, and purchase decision (Figure 2, p. 14). Willett and Pennington (1968) categorized variables with more exactness by their examination of prepurchase shopping intentions, customer characteristics and intentions, salesperson's characteristics and influences, interaction, transaction, and outcomes (Figure 1, p. 12). The Spiro Perreault, and Reynolds (1976) model gave added emphasis to role requirements and characteristics, needs and expectations, and strategy choice (Figure 6, p. 21). Each of these models has contributed to the wealth of knowledge regarding the variables involved in the customer-salesperson interaction process.

Overall, these models contributed to variable conceptualization and theory development. As such, they contributed to a more thorough and comprehensive development of the subject area. However, the

contributions of these models in terms of measuring the variables empirically and testing their relationships was less developed. While the various models emphasized certain variables and relationships, these were not always delineated in enough detail to allow for specific measurement and hypotheses generation. Additionally, there was a lack of consistency in terms of which variables were included and in terms of the definition of those variables which were included. For example, the salesperson component was conceptualized differently in each. In the Willett and Pennington model (1966), the salesperson was depicted in terms of characteristics and influences, while the Levy and Zaltman model (1975) presented the seller in terms of expertise, diagnostic skills, and communication skills (Figure 3, p. 16). The Spiro et al. model (1976), on the other hand, viewed the salesperson in terms of role requirements and characteristics and personal characteristics. Finally, in the Bearden model (1969), the variables which affect the salesperson were not delineated at all.

There was also a lack of consistency in the variables which were used to depict the behavioral influences on the customer. For example, Willett and Pennington (1966) included the following behavioral variables: preshopping purchase intentions, motives, response traits, values, attitudes, social class, reference groups, and family. Levy and Zaltman (1975) presented other buyer variables: mass-media exposure, achievement motivation, control beliefs, and cosmopolitanism. Sheth (1976), however, included personal background, personal life style, and role orientation in his conceptualization

(Figure 5, p. 20). Finally, Spiro et al. (1976) included yet another set of variables, role requirements and characteristics, personal characteristics, needs, and expectations in their model. These conceptual differences and/or the lack of delineation in the salesperson portion of the model were instrumental to the problems faced in developing reliable and valid measurements.

There were several major aspects of the customer-salesperson interaction process which have been neglected in these models. For example, while information processing had been recognized as an accepted part of decision making, it had been ignored in the conceptualization of the customer-salesperson interaction. This aspect included the mental processes of both the customer and the salesperson which accepted and recorded pieces of information from the internal and external environments. As such, information processing was an integral part of the information exchange which took place between the customer and the salesperson.

Communication was another element of the customer-salesperson interaction which had typically been excluded. The exception was in Sheth's model (1976), where he did include communication content and style, but ignored code and communication rules. Code consists of the verbal and nonverbal signals which carry the meaning of the communication. Communication rules are the standardized factors which bridge the code with the content or meaning. As such, these two aspects of interpersonal communication should be included as well as the style and content variables proposed by Sheth.

In summary, a review and assessment of these basic models revealed several areas for improvement. First, to achieve consistency

and completeness, the variables which are included should be those which are congruent with generally recognized models where they existed. For example, the behavioral components could be based on the Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat (1978) model of consumer behavior, which is the most generally recognized model of consumer behavior. Secondly, these models needed to incorporate information processing and the elements of communication into the framework of the customer-salesperson interaction.

III. PROPOSED MODEL

Figure 7 provides a skeletal version of the customer-salesperson interaction process model. This model was organized from a comprehensive review of the literature. It synthesized as well as expanded the current state of the art in the customer-salesperson interaction literature.

The model has three basic components: customer, interaction, and salesperson. The customer and salesperson components are symmetrical, while the interaction component is the binding force or synapse, by analogy, between the customer and the salesperson.

The customer component consists of five elements: customer environment (i.e., the world as he or she perceives it), information processing, information and experience, personal-role characteristics and requirements, and role-specific process. The salesperson component consists of these same five elements; however, they are individualized to the salesperson.

The interaction component consists of interpersonal communication, the interaction environment, and interaction results. As noted

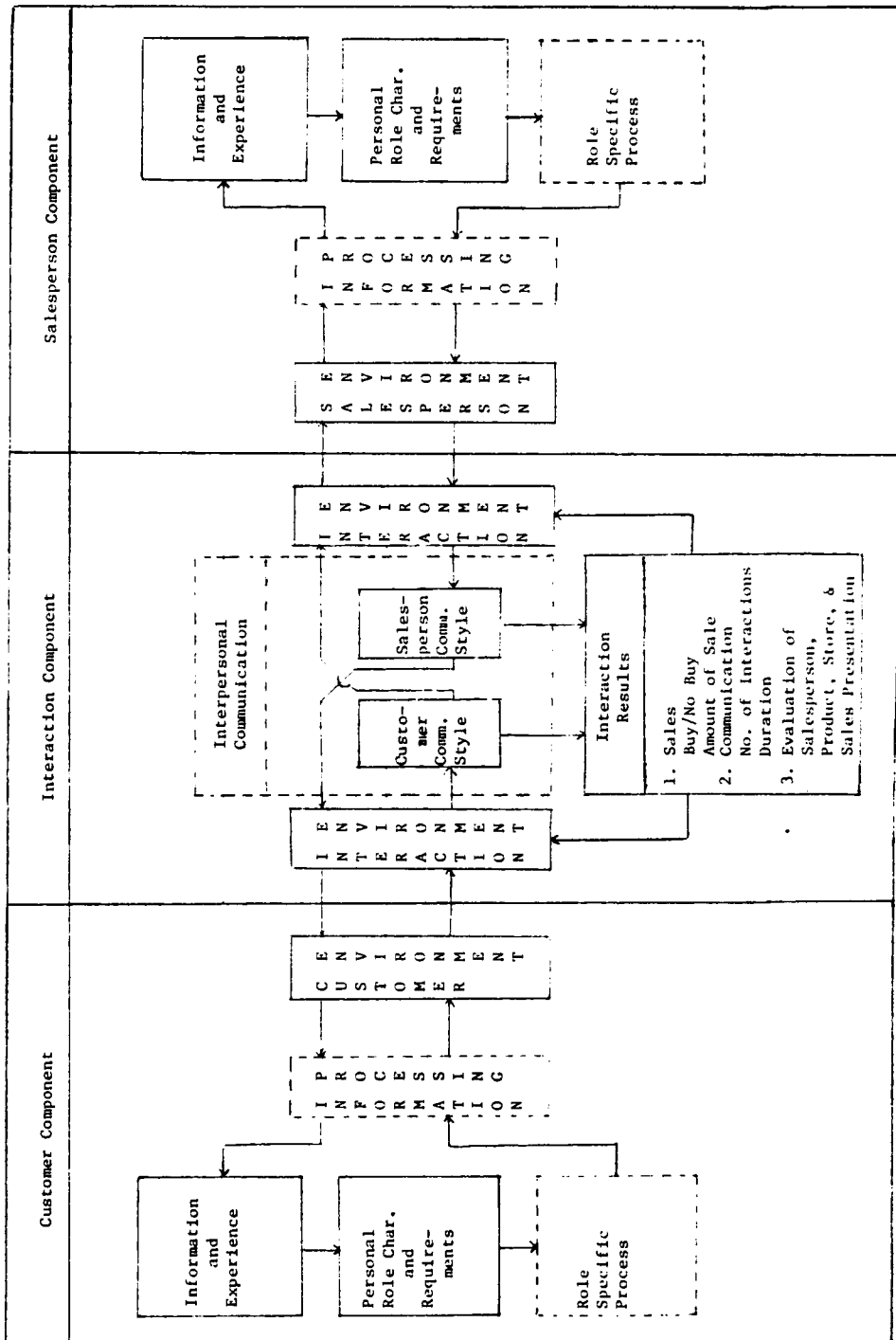


Figure 7. Skeletal model of the customer-salesperson interaction process.

in the introduction, interpersonal communication has four elements: content, code, communication rules, and communication style. Content consists of what is said. Code consists of how it is said. For example, code consists of the verbal (Mortensen, 1972) and nonverbal (Eisenberg and Smith, 1971; Bonoma and Felder, 1977) forms of the content. The communication rules bind the content with a specific code to relay a specific meaning. As the communication occurs over time, the balance of content, code, and communication rules becomes stylized or patterned by influences within the customer and salesperson environments. The interaction environment consists of situational factors which facilitate, hinder, or have no bearing on the interaction. The interplay between interpersonal communication and the interaction environment contributes to the results of the interaction. Interaction results consist of the effect on sales and communication, and evaluations of the salesperson, product, store and sales presentation.

Figure 8 provides a more detailed version of the model. In this figure, the customer and salesperson components differ by environment and the role-specific process. Each individual has his own environment wherein his experiences frame the way in which the world is viewed. Each participant also has his own specific role. For example, in his role as the salesperson, the individual is involved in the activities of impression formation, strategy formation, transmission, and evaluation. These activities may be adjusted in light of the objectives and outcomes of the sales process (Weitz, 1978). The customer's specific role consists of problem recognition, search, alternative evaluation, choice, and outcome (Engle, Blackwell,

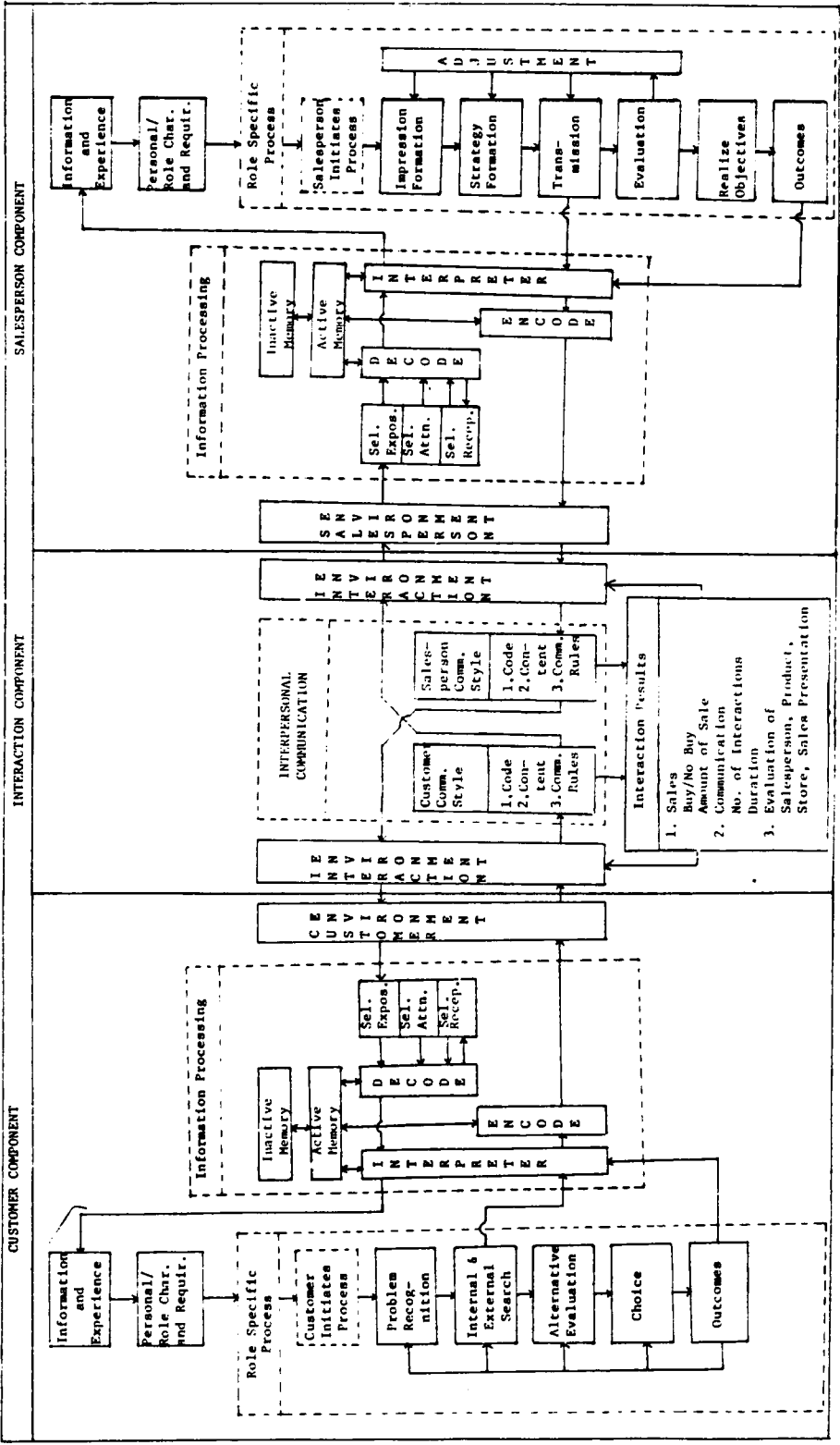


Figure 8. Detail model of the customer-salesperson interaction process.

and Kollat, 1978). In addition, information processing, information and experience, and personal-role characteristics and requirements are unique to each individual.

In essence, the customer-salesperson interaction process has five basic elements: (1) the customer and salesperson environments, (2) information processing and information and experience, (3) personal-role characteristics and requirements, (4) the role-specific processes of the customer and salesperson, and (5) the interaction component, which consists of the interaction environment, interpersonal communication, and interaction results. A more detailed description and a review of the literature on these five basic elements follows.

Customer and Salesperson Environments

The customer or salesperson environment is specific to each individual. It is composed of the things that influence the way in which he or she sees the world. Each individual has different experiences, talents, and skills. As a result, each sees the world from a different perspective. This perspective in turn determines how a person sees the world and relates to others. The inclusion and interpretation of these specific environments has not been addressed in marketing. It is important to note, however, that the customer's and the salesperson's environments are not the same. As a consequence, this may affect the interaction between them.

Information Processing and Information and Experience

Information processing has been studied extensively in the realm of cognitive psychology. However, much of this work has been

interpolated into a marketing context (Howard and Ostlund, 1973; Chestnut and Jacoby, 1977; Engle, Blackwell, and Kollat, 1978; and Bettman, 1979). The field of communication has also contributed to the understanding of information processing by such notions as encoding, decoding, and filtering information via selective exposure, attention, and retention.

In the proposed model, the representation of information processing is a synthesis of work from psychology, marketing, and communication. Since the salesperson and customer are both active receivers and transmitters of information, the conceptualization of information processing is depicted as being the same for both.

Information enters into the individual's environment via bits of coded information (e.g., verbal and nonverbal communication signals). These bits of information enter the salesperson's or customer's environment by way of the senses and sense impulses. However, the salesperson's or customer's internal filtering mechanisms may or may not allow exposure, attention, and/or reception. For example, the salesperson may be daydreaming and fail to be exposed to the customer who casually walks into and out of his department. Stimulus ambiguity is a major determinant of which stimuli are attended to. If the stimulus is unfamiliar, the individual may pay more attention to it than if it is a more familiar cue (Howard and Ostlund, 1973). Before information or verbal and nonverbal cues can be decoded or deciphered, the salesperson must be exposed to and pay attention to the information.

Once the cues are processed through the filtering device, they are then decoded via rules which are stored in memory. As the stimulus cues are decoded, they are given meaning by the interpreter. Essentially, the interpreter adds meaning to the decoded signals and places the information in active or inactive memory as appropriate.

Memory stores many different types of information and experiences (i.e., sets of information). For any one situation, only a subset of all the stored information is needed or is pertinent to the situation. This is the "information and experience" category. It simply acknowledges that, of the wealth of stored information, only isolated pieces of information are used for any one situation at hand. The interpreter is the mechanism that stores, processes, and isolates the relevant pieces of information which feed into person-role characteristics and requirements and, in turn, into the role-specific process.

Within the bounds of the role-specific process, this information is acted upon to reach certain goals of the role. However, this processing may require that information be transmitted into the interaction environment. If so, the interpreter calls forth the rules which encode specific meaning into verbal and nonverbal codes. These signals are then transmitted (e.g., the salesperson talks, scratches his head, looks into someone's eyes, and so forth) to the other person in the interaction. Then, that person processes that information in a similar manner.

The important thing to note is that although both members in the interaction are actively processing information, this aspect

has been studied only from the perspective of the customer (Howard and Ostlund, 1973; Chestnut and Jacoby, 1977; Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat, 1978; and Bettman, 1979). Nothing has been done in this area with regard to the salesperson.

Personal-Role Characteristics and Requirements

Many studies have been done in the area of personal-role characteristics and requirements. These studies have often focused on demographics and physical characteristics but more recently have focused on personality, ability, and dimensions of the role.

Miner (1962) used various personality and ability tests to isolate effective predictors of sales success and to study sales performance factors of dealer salesmen in a petroleum company. Miner (1962, p. 11) found that

. . . success is a function of the ability to work out financial management and pricing problems quickly and correctly in one's head while discussing these matters with individual dealers. . . . One must be able to think effectively in numerical terms while in close proximity to, and interaction with, other people.

He also found that a good salesman rates high on dependence, sociophilia, confidence, and happiness in the Picture Arrangement Test. However, no conclusive evidence was available with regard to the cause-effect relationship. It may have been the case that these personality characteristics are a result of successful selling experiences rather than a cause. Miner (1962) also found that poor performance was associated with measures of low aggression, sociophobia, and strong superego. These findings differed from those of Dunnette and Kirchner (1960) who found that measures of ability predicted

success among industrial, but not retail, salesmen; and Harrell (1960) who found that stability dominance, self-confidence, aggression, and drive measures could differentiate successful and unsuccessful salespeople. Miner's (1962, p. 13) basic conclusion was that

. . . there may be a core of characteristics which contribute to success and failure in a great variety of sales occupations and in addition a number of specific factors which have predictive value only within limited spheres. It seems quite possible that these core characteristics are primarily of an emotional or personality nature and that they are of the type identified in the present study.

Evans (1963) found differences in the way sold and unsold prospects viewed a particular salesperson who called upon them, how the salesperson viewed his role, and differences in pair similarity between sold and unsold dyads. Basically, he found that similarity of attributes within the dyad apparently increased the sales potential. According to Evans (1963, p. 78),

The more alike the salesman and his prospect are, the greater the likelihood for a sale. This is true for physical characteristics (age, height), and other objective factors (income, religion, education), other variables that may be related to personality factors (politics, smoking). It is also important to note that the perceived similarity for religion and politics is much higher and of greater importance to the sales than the true similarity.

A later study (Cotham, 1968) reported some variance in these previous results in that sales aptitude rather than intelligence statistically correlated with performance measures. Cotham also found an absence of statistical relationships between the various performance and personality-related variables such as need for recognition, independence, conformity, support, benevolence, leadership, social intelligence, and sense of empathy. In addition, Cotham (1968) found that most of the salesman's prior life history experiences did not

correlate with performance. The exceptions were age, amount of formal education, and prior selling experience so that the best producers were older, less educated, and had several years of varied sales experience. He also found that very little relationship between job satisfaction and job performance existed.

Tosi (1966) conducted a study to determine the effects of expectations and buyer-seller role consensus on the success of the salesperson. Roles were based on norms and referred to what should be done with regard to the behavior of occupants of positions, while role consensus was the extent of agreement between two people concerning role behavior. He found that role regulated the relations between people. He also found that conflict with regard to the interaction could be minimized when the roles of both persons were expected and accepted by each other. Basically Tosi (1966, p. 147) found that, in addition to the physical characteristics and objective factors found by Evans (1963), "the customer's conception of what that behavior should be is a necessary condition before dyadic interaction can continue." More specifically, Tosi (1966, p. 137) noted:

The expectations of a customer regarding the role performance of a salesman may be related significantly to the success or failure of the salesman with that customer. The expectation level may be defined as the degree to which an individual's probability estimates and desirability estimates of another's behavior for a situation differ. For instance, if the customer believes it desirable that the salesman use a relaxed, easy approach in selling and that a particular salesman will use that method, the conformity of projected behavior with a behavioral norm should facilitate the selling situation. The salesman is acting as the buyer thinks he should. Similarly, the customer may feel it is desirable that salesmen personally inform him of price changes in fast-moving merchandise. When the customer's projection of a salesman's probable behavior

is that the salesman will inform him, the anxiety and concern of the customer should be reduced, creating the environment for an effective selling situation.

Beyond role requirements and expectations, Montgomery and Silk (1971) supported the suggestion that opinion leadership overlapped areas where interest overlapped. When the customer saw the seller as having more "in common" with the customer, then the opinion leadership of the seller was likely to increase. A supporting study by Pruden and Petersen (1971) suggested that sales performance and job satisfaction increased as a salesman's perceived power over customers increased. This finding was highly related to those of role requirements and expectations. However, it was overlapping more with the area of social power.

Social power has been defined as "the ability of one person or group to cause another person or group to change in the direction intended by the influencer" (Busch and Wilson, 1976, p. 3). French and Raven (1959) identified five bases of social power: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power. The primary bases of social power available to marketers were those of reward power, referent power, and expert power (Runyon, 1977) and legitimate power (Spiro and Perreault, 1979). Reward power involved product quality and buying incentives, i.e., being able to satisfy a want or need through the purchase. Referent power was a feeling or desire for identification with a person or group and involved no outward rewards or punishments. Expert power required that an individual be a reputable technical authority or expert in an area. It required that he be able to present specific information concerning

the company's market offerings and show how they would be used in the client company. Legitimate power dealt with the salesperson's attempts to draw on the customer's feelings of shared values concerning the relevant reputation and experience of the salesman and his company (Spiro and Perreault, 1979).

Busch and Wilson (1976) explored social power from two bases: expert power and referent power. While these were conventionally thought to be the domain of family, social, and cultural groups, Busch and Wilson (1976) extended these expert and referent bases to the buyer-seller dyad. They found that the stronger the expert and referent power bases, the more likely the customer would perceive the salesperson as being more trustworthy. In addition, they found that a salesperson's expertise was more important in gaining the customer's trust than his referent power. Referent power was more important for a salesperson selling a variety of products in that greater referent power enabled the salesman to exert influence in a large number of situations or circumstances. Brock (1965), on the other hand, explored salesperson expertise vs. customer-salesman similarity as influences of successful sales. He found that similarity had more effect than expertise. In whatever form, social power was a viable aspect of interpersonal influence.

One source of interpersonal influence is that of credibility. While credibility is related to social power, it merits a separate discussion. According to O'Shaughnessy (1971-72, p. 16),

The perceived credibility of an argument will depend on whether it coheres with the values and experience of the customer; a logical argument that runs contrary to the customer's attitudes or value system, or is couched in terms that are outside his experience, is not likely to make much impact.

In complement, Woodside and Davenport (1976) reported a study which attempted to increase demand at a specific price and to change the elasticity of the price-quantity demanded relationship by varying salesman behavior toward customers. They found that for some products within specific price ranges, price decisions were less important for customer's purchase decisions than other marketing variables such as sales message and credibility of the communicator.

Other intrapersonal influences stem from the individual's social class, reference groups, and family. The individual assimilates these influences into his personal makeup. Then as both parties (the salesperson and the customer) enter the interaction, these influences in turn affect the interpersonal characteristics of the interaction.

From these studies, it can be seen that the examination of personal characteristics has progressed from an emphasis of demographic type traits to one of psychological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal traits or influences. This reflects the changing emphasis in personal selling from the salesperson in isolation to a more interactive approach which considers both the salesperson and the customer.

Role-Specific Process

At any point in time, an individual may or may not be assuming one or a number of different roles. Also, the individual may or may not be aware of assuming the role(s) and may be more deeply

attached to some roles than others. For purposes of this study, the roles of customer and salesperson will be examined. Each is consummating a different process which includes different objectives, goals, methods, strategies, and patterns of behavior, be they physical, emotional, and/or mental.

Role-specific process of the salesperson. The process used in this model is that of Weitz (1978) which included the activities of impression formation, strategy formulation, transmission, evaluation, and adjustment (Figure 9). Impression formation consisted of the salesperson combining information gained through past experience with information relevant to the specific interaction to develop an impression of the customer. By examining past experiences with the target customer and other customers, by observing the target customer during an interaction, and by projecting himself into the target customer's decision-making situation, the salesperson could derive information about the target customer. The salesperson's impression of the customer's decision process could be divided into three elements: (1) his impression of the customer's choice space; (2) his impression of how the customer will combine information in the choice space to arrive at an overall judgement or choice; and (3) his perception of the potential changes which he can realize in the customer's choice space or choice rule.

Strategy formulation consisted of the salesperson analyzing his impression of the customer and developing a communication strategy. The communication strategy included an objective for the strategy,

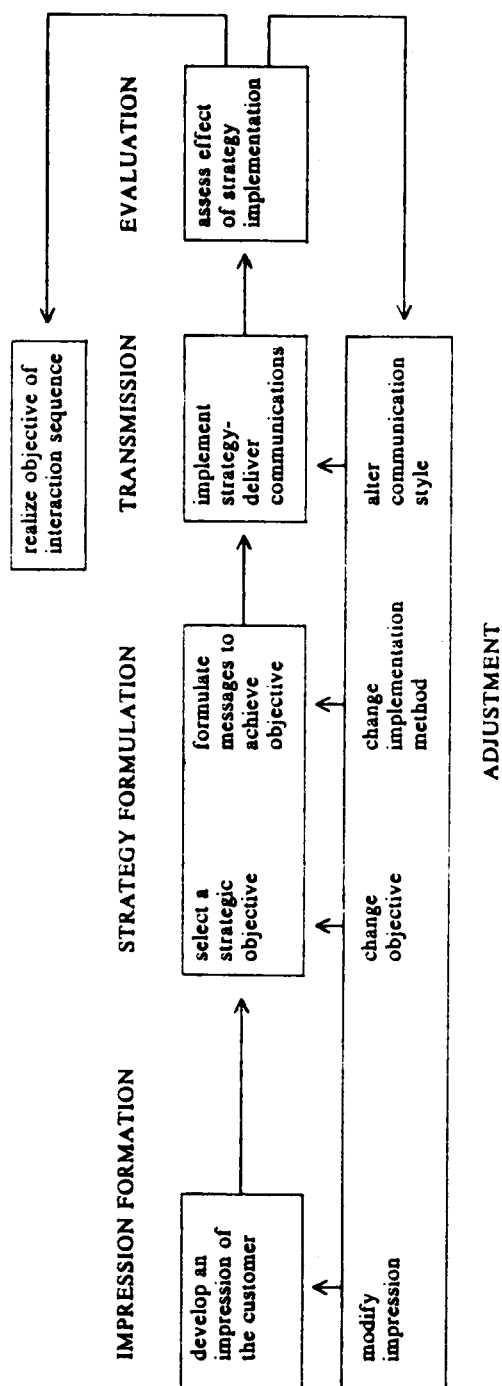


Figure 9. Weitz model.

Source: Weitz, B.A. (1978), "Relationship Between Salesperson Performance and Understanding of Customer Decision Making," Journal of Marketing Research, 15 (November), 502.

a method for implementing the strategy, and specific message formats.

Weitz (1978, p. 505) listed some potential strategic objectives.

1. Changing the dimensionality of the customer's choice space (e.g., adding a new dimension).
2. Increasing or decreasing the weights attached to specific product dimensions.
3. Adding or deleting products from the customer's consideration set.
4. Altering the customer's beliefs about the performance of the product in relation to competitive products.
5. Modifying the customer's choice rule.

Transmission, evaluation, and adjustment were less developed by Weitz. Once the strategy was formulated, the salesperson transmitted the messages to the customer. As these messages were delivered, the salesperson evaluated their effects by observing the customer's reactions and soliciting his opinions. Given these evaluations, appropriate adjustments were then made on the preceding four activities.

It should also be noted that this salesperson decision process is a specific case of a general decision process in that the four activities can be equated to a general decision process consisting of problem recognition, search, alternative evaluation, choice, and outcomes (Engle, Blackwell, and Kollat, 1978). Problem recognition is assumed in that the seller meets a customer who has recognized a problem. The seller's "problem recognition" is then to help that customer in a way which meets both of their objectives. Impression formation can be considered as a specific case of search, while strategy formulation can be considered as a specific case of alternative evaluation. To implement the strategy, a choice must be made, and evaluation is then based on outcomes of this choice. "Adjustment" corresponds to feedback in the general decision process framework.

Weitz's model specifies the salesperson decision process, given the role of the salesperson. However, this model conceptually (although not literally) follows the general decision process framework. This overlap intuitively strengthens the activity choice sequence suggested by Weitz.

Role-specific process of the customer. To examine fully the interaction between the buyer and the seller, one must not only examine the seller's decision process, but also the consumer's decision process. The Engle, Blackwell, and Kollat model (1978) conceptualized consumer decision making in terms of problem solving theory. This was one of three theories of consumer decision making (Runyon, 1977) and was the case where a problem was a "perceived difference between an existing state of affairs and a desired state of affairs" (Runyon, 1977, p. 324). Utility theory and risk reduction theory were also potential views of consumer decision making. Utility theory assumed that the consumer was rational and that the function of decisions was to minimize economic and psychological satisfactions or to minimize economic and psychological outlay. Risk reduction theory argued that the primary functions of consumer decision making was to reduce risk.

Even though consumers do not always define or solve the right problems, the conception of the consumer as a problem solver does justice to the facts. Problem solving accounts for the self-serving aspects of behavior, economic behavior, risk reduction, trivial non-risk decisions, brand switching, trial of new products, and the deliberate taking of risk (Runyon, 1977). Therefore, the

consumer decision process used in this conceptualization is that of Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat (1978).

The Engel et al. model (Figure 10) depicted the consumer decision process in five phases: (1) problem recognition, (2) search, (3) alternative evaluation, (4) choice, and (5) outcomes. The first phase of the consumer decision process was problem recognition, which was defined as a perceived difference between the ideal state and the actual state sufficient to arouse and activate the decision process. The major determinants of problem recognition were motives, experience, and information, with motives being enduring predispositions to attain specified goals which are influenced by personality and lifestyle.

Search resulted when beliefs and attitudes were inadequate. The decisions of whether or not to search, where to search, and how much to search were a balance between cost and benefit. If the perceived benefit merited, then the consumer could seek out information from private and personal information sources such as family, peers, and associates and from other non-personal information sources such as advertising and personal selling. The result of search was that the consumer learned the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives for solving the recognized problem.

Alternative evaluation was the process of comparing various alternatives for purchase against those criteria or product attributes felt by the consumer to be important in the decision, i.e., evaluative criteria. Evaluative criteria were shaped by motives and information and experience. With regard to the formation and function of beliefs,

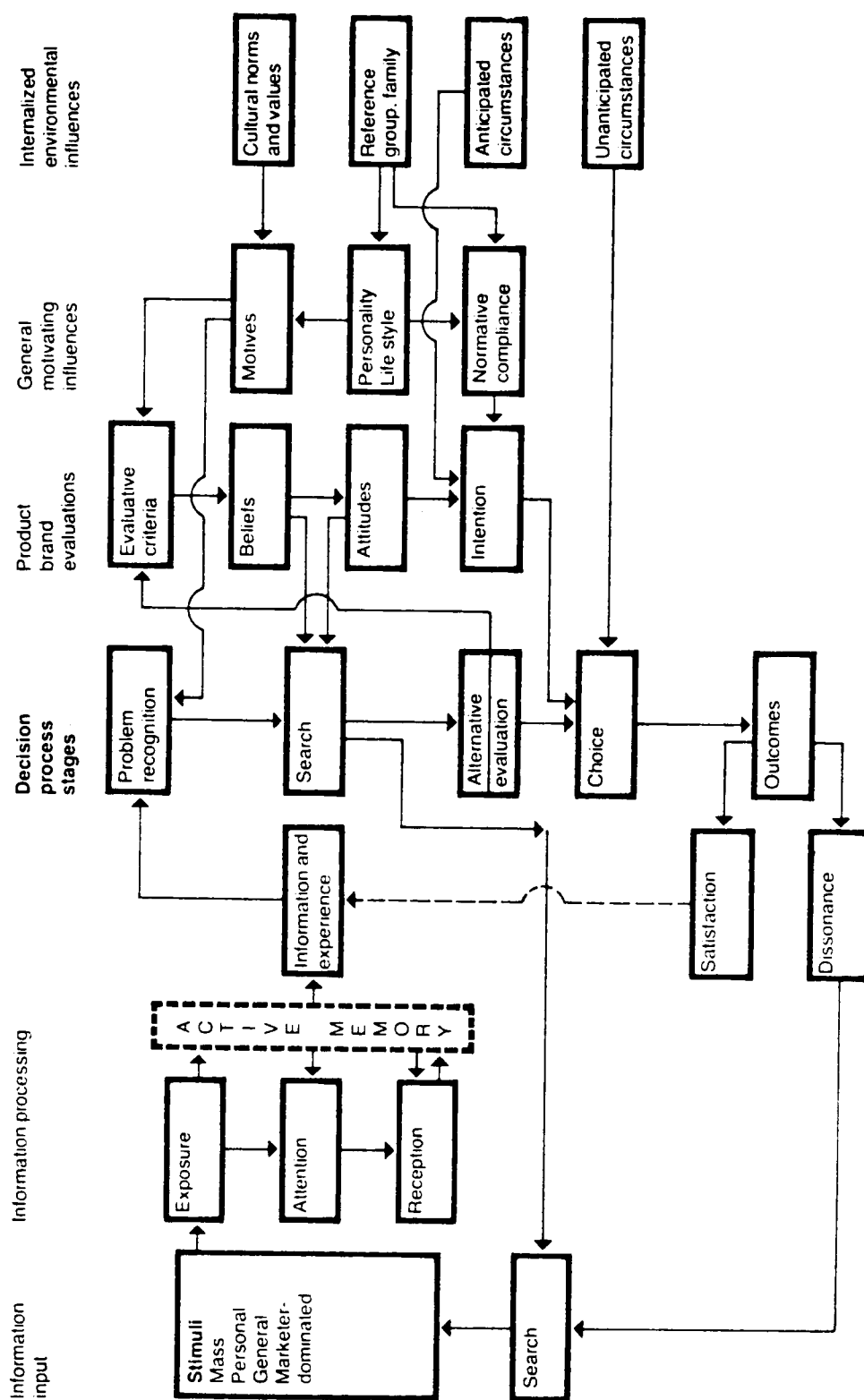


Figure 10. Engle, Blackwell, and Kollat model.

Source: Engel, J.F., R.D. Blackwell, and D.T. Kollat (1978), Consumer Behavior, Third Edition, Hinsdale, Illinois: Dryden Press, 32.

attitudes, and intentions, Engel, Blackwell, and Kollat (1978, p. 409) stated the following:

Now it can be said with some certainty that attitudes predict intentions, which in turn will predict buying action, all things being equal. Attitudes are the outcomes of beliefs, which state the probability that an alternative under consideration actually possesses the desired attributes specified by the evaluative criteria.

Choice was the fourth phase and included the selection and purchase of an alternative. Choice was the outcome of intentions and unanticipated circumstances such as lack of funds, price reduction, and so forth. Outcomes, the fifth phase, included dissonance or doubt about making a correct decision and satisfaction versus nonsatisfaction.

This conceptualization of consumer decision making viewed the consumer as an active decision-making agent affected by various internal and external influences. The decision-making process as such was dynamic and completely individual. Some steps might be minimized or eliminated, while others were completely exhausted for their decision-making benefits.

Interaction Component

The interaction component is presented in four sections. The first section provides a general discussion of interaction. The second section presents the interaction environment. The third section consists of a discussion of interpersonal communication and its four basic elements: code, content, communication rules, and communication style. The final section discusses the results of the interaction.

The traditional approach to the interaction component has been a focus on the "interaction," "transaction," and "outcome" variables.

As noted by Enis and Chonko (1978), the work in the area of interaction was important, but it had been limited and fragmented. Classic interaction studies included those of Whyte (1948) and Lombard (1955) looking at the waitress-customer dyad and the salesgirl-customer dyad, respectively.

More recently, David and Webster (1968, p. 155) noted the importance of the interaction to selling, stating that

In order to understand the selling process, we must take into account the actions, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, and reactions of both the salesman and the prospect. In interpersonal interaction each person's behavior is at once both a stimulus and a response to the behavior of the other person--both action and reaction. As a form of interpersonal interaction, selling is a process in which the salesman and the prospect are simultaneously influencing and reacting to the attitudes, expectations, and behavior of one another. How they do this is importantly determined by their perceptions.

Capon et al. (1977) provided a typology for classifying selling process studies wherein models were categorized by the extent to which a study focused on the interaction between the salesperson and the prospect, as opposed to using the more familiar model of one-way mass communications of source-message-receiver (S-M-R). In the interaction process studies, the independent variables required feedback from the prospect for their generation, while the same variables in the S-M-R studies did not require this feedback. Capon listed five studies under the interaction process model, three verbal (Pennington, 1968; Willett and Pennington, 1966; Olshavsky, 1972, 1973, 1975) and two nonverbal (Chapple and Donald, 1947; Hulbert and Capon, 1972, 1973), all of an observational-field nature.

Varela (1971) developed a comprehensive design for studying the interaction, which involved a situation where buyers visited the

seller to make purchase decisions. Varela was able to control the elements of the sales presentation as well as the surroundings in which the sale presentation took place. Based on a variety of theoretical perspectives such as arousal theory, reactance formation, cognitive consistency, immunization techniques, and distraction, he manipulated a wide range of verbal and nonverbal stimuli. He also avoided the one-way paradigm of most studies. This design enabled the salespeople to respond with appropriate strategies to problems or questions raised by the customer.

Interaction environment. The interaction environment consists of the facilitators and inhibitors of verbal and nonverbal communication. For example, communication facilitators may be as follows: critical, responsible listening; feedback; credibility; similarity; communication skills; and physical support objects in the environment, such as the cash register or money. Other examples of these facilitators may be price leaders, multiple pricing, displays, reusable packaging, and positioning on the shelf. In addition, store location, store design, assortment, advertising, sales promotion, and store image could be considered situational or environmental variables (Runyon, 1977).

Communication inhibitors may be such things as noisy and crowded surroundings and out-of-stocks. For example, a lot of noise in the surrounding area is usually distracting to two people who are trying to carry on a conversation. A crowded store might also inhibit the sale because some people do not want to wait to pay for their merchandise. Inhibitors can also be viewed as the absence or the

negative use of the facilitators. For example, if displays are dirty and haphazardly constructed, then the attention they attract may serve to inhibit rather than to promote the sale.

Most of the research which has been done in a real world situation has focused on either the customer or salesperson (Willett and Pennington, 1966; Bauer and Wortzel, 1966; Pennington, 1968; and Olshavsky, 1973). Less has been done on classifying the situational variables or seeking causes and relationships with regard to the interaction as a whole. However, Tucker (1964, pp. 74-75) noted that the nature of the customer-salesperson relationship varied with the selling environment. In evidence, he classified furniture stores into three classes: (1) the "borax," which appealed to lower-class customers; (2) the "fashionable," which appealed to upper-middle class customers; and (3) the "high fashion," which was characterized as offering the services of interior designers. He commented on the variation in relations with each class:

In the first type of store, the salesman is apt to be forceful, dynamic, and just a bit brusque. He may play the part of a tipster on price or be obsequious. In order to speed up the customer's reaction, he may rely heavily on the role of a busy businessman who is impatient with a relatively unimportant sale. He is quite likely to let the customer know that he has superior information and taste and that his word should, therefore, be taken as law on the matter. . . . The salesman in the second type of store is much more likely to be friendly, treating his customers as equals, deferring to their opinions. He is probably less certain of his own ability to judge what is in good taste than is the salesman in either the high-fashion or the "borax" store, because a number of his customers look down on the kind of furniture he has in his own home. . . . He is much more likely than a "borax" salesman to talk about matters unassociated with furniture, discovering what the customer's job is, and discussing events of common interest. He wants to be liked and makes a point of finding some common ground with the customer.

The salesman in the high-fashion shop generally knows furniture construction, fabrics, and current fashion better than do his customers, and has complete confidence in his own judgements. If a lower-class customer enters the store by mistake, he will be warned off rapidly but subtly. Unlike the salesman in the middle-class store, the high-fashion salesman does not attempt to establish casual friendship with the customer. His talk is all of furniture and decoration, with emphasis on the aesthetic rather than on the practical elements of construction. He wishes to be regarded as a specialist and makes his expertise known.

It is within this interaction environment that the interaction between the customer and the salesperson takes place.

Theoretically, the interaction component is the least developed of the three components. In part, this is due to the confusion between "interaction" in the S-M-R sense and the "interaction process." Secondly, as noted above, the terms "interaction," "transaction," and "outcome" have all been used to denote a focus on the actual exchange between the customer and the salesperson. However, these terms have often been overlapping and unclear in meaning. This model presents interpersonal communication as the synapse between the customer and the salesperson on the premise that the communication which takes place between the two individuals is the essential ingredient in the interaction.

Interpersonal communication. The basic communication model which contributed to the interaction component was developed by Shannon and Weaver (1949) and modified by Schramm (1955), wherein a message from a source is encoded into message form for the receiver or destination. Feedback helps to ensure that the original message is received as intended. Noise in the channel can potentially block the transmission of a signal. More specifically, the source is

a person or group of people having a message to share with some other person or group of people. The message is encoded into symbolic expressions or signals (e.g., words) which in the process of transmission follow a certain path or channel from the source to the end. Decoding transforms the symbolic expressions into messages which are received by the destination. Both encoding and decoding are mental processes. In the customer-salesperson model, the elements of the communication model which are internal processes have been portrayed and discussed within the customer and salesperson environments (i.e., encode, decode, and interpreter as the source and receiver). The proposed model includes nonverbal communication which Shannon and Weaver (1949) do not emphasize. Some of the nonverbal messages such as the paralanguage category use a verbal channel, while the others use a nonverbal channel.

Channel noise is an additional variable or set of variables which is pertinent to communications in the customer-salesperson interaction. A channel conveys the signals of a message to a receiver. However, channel noise can be a common deterrent in this process. These types of variables were discussed as a part of the interaction environment.

This basic communication model provides the basis of the communication synapse. The communication synapse consists of the actual verbal and nonverbal communications (i.e., codes) as they move through the communication channel. However, the communication synapse is more than just the verbal or nonverbal codes. It also includes the elements of content, communication rules, and style. A discussion of each of these elements follows.

(1) Code. The system of symbolic expressions (i.e., code) in the model can take two basic forms: digital and analogic codes. Digital codes have discrete code elements and formal rules for combining these elements. Digital codes can name or quantify. The most familiar digital codes would be verbal and numerical. The digital codes are usually learned, as no "natural" relationship between the code and the referent exists. Analogic codes bear some resemblance to the elements or relationships in the events they represent. Examples of analogic codes would be motion pictures, still photographs, cartoons, and portraits. Re-enacting earlier behavior would also be a form of analogic coding. Analogic codes require less learning. For example, while "man" has digital codes in different languages, the stick figure of a man is a more universal code. The analogic code may require more work on the part of the encoder and less on the part of the decoder (Harrison and Crouch, 1975).

Nonverbal communication can be viewed as a middle point on a digital-analogic coding continuum. Nonverbal codes may have discrete code elements and formal rules of combining the elements, or they could also satisfy the requirements of the analogic dimension. It is important to note, however, that nonverbal codes may require that an individual learn the code elements and rules for combining these elements.

In an interaction, both digital and analogic codes are used together. They cannot be separated in an on-going communication. For example, a word (digital) can be uttered with various paralinguistic qualities (i.e., soft, loud; high, low; and so forth). These two

codings blend together but may serve two different purposes (Littlejohn, 1978). According to Watzlawich et al. (1967), the digital code may communicate a content dimension, while the analogic code communicates a relationship.

An understanding of verbal codes is closely related to language. Language is the most common and formalized system of verbal codes. It is comprised of verbal signs or codes as designated by people over time. Some generalizations can be made about language. First of all, language is a structured sequence of speech sounds which are organized according to rules, syntax, or grammar. Secondly, the speakers of a language must acquire an intuitive knowledge of grammar. Some theorists believe this acquisition is learned, while others feel it is nativist, with important linguistic information being innate. Thirdly, people must be able to know and use grammar to create and understand novel sentences (Littlejohn, 1978). As such, verbal codes are intricately related to language.

In addition, verbal codes may often be referred to as jargons, especially by outsiders who have difficulty understanding them. Verbal codes may include professional jargon, occupational jargon, technical jargon, popular jargon, or secret languages (Bolinger, 1975).

Mortensen (1972) classified verbal research into verbal appeals, message order and organization, and patterns of argument. Examples of verbal appeals could be anxiety, guilt, sympathy, psychological well-being, physical comfort, security, pleasure, joy, and so forth, with fear arousal being the most widely researched. While message order and organization are often taken for granted, this aspect

of verbal communication is very important in our Western societies. Some of the issues generated have been primacy-recency (Lund, 1925; Hovland, 1957; Mortensen, 1972) and strategic considerations of message organization (McGuire, 1957; Mortensen, 1972). Research in this area has also examined patterns of argument, looking at two-sided versus one-sided messages (Hovland, et al., 1949; Mortensen, 1972), the use of mentioning versus refuting counterarguments (Ludlum, 1958; Thistlethwaite and Kemenetzky, 1955; Thistlethwaite et al., 1956; Mortensen, 1972), the inoculating effects of two-sided arguments (Lumsdaine and Janis, 1953; McGuire, 1962, 1968; Mortensen, 1972), and the use of evidence (Hanneman and McEwen, 1975; McCroskey, 1969; Mortensen, 1972) in persuasive communication.

Nonverbal communication is less formalized and often very subtle. This form can be used to express emotion and thoughts via smiles, tears, gestures, body movements, posture, speech rate, intonation, and number of speech errors. Nonverbal communication often can enhance or detract from verbal efforts. In general, this form communicates feelings, preferences, likings, and support or contradiction of verbal communications (DeLozier, 1976). Hall (1959) categorized ten different "message systems," with only one involving language. He suggested that nonverbal communications may transmit considerably more meaning than we realize. Mehrabian (1969) found that only 7% of a message's effect is carried by words, with the remainder being nonverbal. Eisenberg and Smith (1971) typed nonverbal communication into three categories: paralanguage, kinesics, and proxemics. Paralanguage includes the study of voice set (e.g., intensity, volume,

pitch, resonance, rate, and rhythm) and nonverbal vocalizations (e.g., laughing, sobbing, momentary variations in pitch or volume, and sounds or silences which appear between articulation of words). Kinesics is the study of body movement, with proxemics involving the relationships between the communicator's body and other people or objects in the environment.

Some generalizations can be made about nonverbal signs. First of all, these codes involve bodily, spatial, and vocal behaviors. Secondly, the many nonverbal behaviors in a message are interrelated. The vocal, kinesic, and proxemic behaviors form a total gestalt. Some behaviors may repeat or complement. A single motion of the body is rarely used to communicate a meaning. However, it is not clear whether or not nonverbal cues are structured syntactically like language. Thirdly, nonverbal cues may perform a variety of functions in the interaction. They may convey meaning, emotion, tension, and regulate the interaction (Littlejohn, 1978).

Hulbert and Capon (1972) presented a twelve-cell matrix of interpersonal communication in marketing. While verbal communication occupied only one cell in the matrix, a wide variety of behavior, generally nonverbal, remained. Verbal communication could consist of such qualities as voice set, accent, temporal speech patterning, voice qualities, vocalizations, and verbalizations. Nonverbal communication could consist of such qualities as physical features, clothing, posture, axial orientation, distance, body movement, facial expression, eyeline, gesture, head orientation, personal odor, touching behavior, and thermal qualities. The salesperson communicates on both verbal

and nonverbal levels, even though the literature has stressed face-to-face verbal communication.

(2) Content. Content is the second variable in the communication synapse. Content has received sporadic attention in the literature. However, the method of content analysis has been gaining attention in the areas of communication and marketing.

The content of communication may be defined as

. . . the ideational material contained in the message. Ideas have to be presented in some order; and they have to be presented in some linguistic code. They have to be delivered into the channel and then extracted by the receiver and given meaning. . . . Stated most simply, content elements should communicate an idea (Anderson, 1972, p. 97).

Two different aspects of content can be considered: content about the relationship and content about certain topics or subjects (Harrison and Crouch, 1975). The latter is a more familiar form. It is usually easy to identify what is being "talked about," be it the weather, a book, the movies, or whatever. Content about the relationship between the two communicators is a form of communication which is often taken for granted. Before two people can communicate with each other, they have to set up their relationship or their own little "communication system," such that content in the messages will enable them to create, maintain, or even destroy their "communication system." For example, the two individuals must decide whether they are available for the interaction and for how long. The interaction must be initiated, and it must be decided who will speak when and for how long. The individuals may be so adept at sending these messages

that this form of content is not even noticed. The more ambiguous the situation, the more attention this content receives.

With regard to the two basic forms of content, relational and topical, more work has been done on the topical content than on the relational content. Additionally, in the area of topical content, there are no standard categories for classifying the content variable. These will vary according to the intent of the study, data available, and so forth.

Content analysis (Kassarjian, 1977) is a tool which has been used for measuring topical and relational content. Berelson (1952) categorized the uses of content analysis by the form of the content, the substance of the content, the producers of the content, the audience of the content, and the effects of the content. For example, Bales (1950) devised a system of interaction categories based on group functioning. This categorization consisted of twelve content behavior categories: shows solidarity, shows tension release, agrees, gives suggestion, gives opinion, gives orientation, asks for orientation, asks for opinion, asks for suggestion, disagrees, shows tension, and show antagonism. These content categories could be used to examine topical as well as relational content. For example, Willett and Pennington (1966) assessed transactions in terms of these content categories.

Condon (1966) listed eight different categories of content: phatic communication, prevention of communication, record-transmitting communication, instrumental communication, affective communication, catharsis, magic, and ritual. Phatic communication consists of

small talk, uninspired greetings, and idle chatter. The second category gives the message, "I don't want to talk to you anymore." A record-transmitting communication relays some information that is received by another person. Instrumental content means that as we say something, then something happens as the result of that content. Affective content consists of the relay of emotional feeling by the speaker to the listener. In catharsis, a physical stimulus finds expression in a symbol. The symbol eventually ceases to stand directly for anything in the outside world except an attitude toward whatever produced it. For example, we move from physical sensation to verbal assault on that sensation (e.g., "damn it") to mere release of tension. Magic as a content category consists of the belief that one can alter a thing by altering its word. The last category, ritual, consists of content which emphasizes a sense of community among its members and a sense of permanence. Rituals are performed with others on some occasion and with special care to details. As such, topical and relational content could be classified by these eight categories.

Wilson (1976) provided an example of a classification of content in the sales area. This categorization was specific to the salesperson-customer interaction. Content could be classified into each of the five stages of the sales process model: source legitimization, information exchange-problem identification, attribute delineation, attribute value negotiation, and relationship maintenance.

Angelmar and Stern (1978) developed the following content categories: questions, self-disclosures, recommendations and warnings,

positive and negative normative appeals, commands, commitments, and rewards and punishments. These categories are similar to the Bales categorization. This similarity could be expected because both authors were focusing on bargaining behavior.

Sheth (1976) presented an additional framework with which to examine the content of the communication. He proposed that a five-dimensional utility space underlies buyer-seller expectations about a product or service. These dimensions consist of functional utility, social-organizational utility, situational utility, emotional utility, and curiosity utility. Functional utility is strictly limited to a product's performance, purpose of existence, and classification into a type of good or service. Social-organizational utility is created when a product or service acquires social-organizational connotations or imageries independent of its performance or functional utility. Situational utility represents a product's utility which is derived from the existence of a set of situations or circumstances. Due to its association with other objects, events, individuals, or organizations, a product may also evoke strong emotive feelings such as respect, anger, love, and so forth. The final utility, curiosity, is related to novelty, curiosity, and exploratory needs among individuals.

Pennington (1968) examined content in appliance transactions. He found that the focus of bargaining was on concession limits such as presentation of prices, delivery dates, product features, and in statements of desired price range, styles, and product features. He also found that bargaining behavior exerts an important impact

on ultimate purchase outcomes, particularly if customers have stopped in several stores. Pennington (1968) isolated eleven variables which appeared to affect the likelihood of a completed purchase when the transaction was observed: number of stores shopped by customer, frequency of direct offers, relative frequency of attempts to change concession limits, frequency of commitment to concession limits, frequency of attempts to change concession limits by devaluating other's products, frequency of reference to product quality, frequency of reference to delivery, frequency of reference to styling, relative frequency of reference to price, relative frequency to warranty, and relative frequency of reference to brand.

In addition, Ericson and Rogers (1973) provided a procedure for analyzing relational communication. Relational communication referred to the control aspects of message exchanges that define an interactor's relationship with others. In this procedure, the control-defining aspects of communication (e.g., support, nonsupport, extension, assertion, instruction, order, topic change, and so forth) were the focus of the coding system as described. However, this analysis dealt with sequences of messages rather than individual messages. Interaction analysis techniques have typically been single message coding schemes as opposed to system coding schemes.

In summary, the content dimension of interpersonal communication is a relevant variable for study. There are two basic forms of content: relational content and topical content. Each is utilized in the customer-salesperson interaction process. In addition, further categorizations have been presented. However, the use of these

categorizations would depend on the specific objectives of the classification. As noted earlier, a categorization could be based on the form, substance, producers, audience, and/or effects of the content. As such, content analysis may be a useful tool in examining the content variable.

(3) Communication rules. The third element of the communication synapse is communication rules. According to Steinberg and Miller (1975, pp. 127-128)

Except for occasional fleeting exchanges, all communication transactions are governed by at least two kinds of interrelated rules: rules pertaining to communication structure and rules pertaining to communication content. In many cases, these rules have been determined by custom and tradition, or by authority and power; they are imposed upon the participants in a specific communication transaction. But in other instances, many of the rules evolve out of the continuing transaction; they are created by the particular communicators . . . (e.g., parliamentary deliberation). There are many explicit and intricate rules pertaining to communication structure: a motion to adjourn takes precedence over a motion to postpone indefinitely; a motion to amend is debatable while a motion to table is not; a motion to close debate requires the support of two-thirds of the assembly, but a main motion can be passed by a single majority. Moreover, the content of communication is rigidly regulated: points of order must deal with violations of the rule system; remarks must be germane to the motion on the floor; members of the assembly must "keep their cool" and refrain from name-calling or personal vendettas--in fact, flowery forms of address such as, "the Honorable Senator," or, "the Distinguished Representative from Hillcrest Dormitory," are usually the order of the day.

In many situations, the communication rules, while still largely externally imposed on a particular group of communicators, are not as rigid as those governing parliamentary deliberation. However, in most formal organizations, there are rules imposed upon communication between a superior and a subordinate. In interpersonal communication, the rules evolve out of the interaction and are largely determined

by the communicators themselves. Rules are constantly developing and being refined. Assessing the motivations, needs, and wants of the other person is a necessary prerequisite to developing and accepting communication rules. As such, due to its small number of participants, the dyadic relationship stands the best chance of success.

Structural rules govern verbal behaviors or language. For example, grammatical rules govern the word order in sentences. Nonverbal codes may also have a structure which governs them, although there is no consensus on that system of rules. Structural and content rules also guide the combinations of verbal with nonverbal communication. Rules also guide the process whereby the code is combined with the content or meaning. Many of these rules are habitual because they were learned in the younger years as language was acquired. However, other rules on structure and content are learned as the situation develops. More specifically, the parties to the interaction develop the rules as the interaction develops.

For example, Willett and Pennington (1966) presented four major findings in their study of transactions in the customer-salesperson interaction:

1. Length--The average interaction lasted 23 minutes with length of time varying from 1 minute to over 2 hours.
2. Velocity--Over 50% of all transactions generated between six and eleven acts per minute, and the average for all interactions was ten acts per minute.
3. Content--The most frequent type of interaction was the giving of orientation (information, clarification, and so

on), followed by the giving of opinion. These two categories accounted for over 75% of the interaction.

4. Interaction roles--Interaction roles designate the relative contribution of interaction behavior by both parties. In general, customers performed half as many acts as the salesperson. Attempted answers were primarily the domain of the salespeople while in the question categories, customer acts outnumbered salesperson acts by a multiple of four. Customers were more likely to give positive reactions, whereas salespeople were almost completely responsible for disagreement, tension, and antagonism.

The researchers found that basically the customer rarely achieves the upper hand and that the salesperson controls the interaction by patterns of response. These patterns of response are analogous to the relational rules that establish and maintain the relationship between the customer and the salesperson.

(4) Communication style. As communication occurs over time, the balance of content, code, and communication rules become patterned or stylized. In other words, style refers to an individual's characteristic tendency to choose particular patterns of communication (Barber, 1978). For example, while rules dictate the arrangement of words in sentences (e.g., subject, verb, object) and frequently determine which words must be used (e.g., past, present, future tense), style refers to an individual's characteristic tendencies to choose particular and even habitual combinations of code, content, and communication rules. For example, a person may choose simple or

multisyllabic words, short or long sentence construction, particular phrases (e.g., "you know," "all right," "ok"), particular stresses on content (e.g., to make a sale or to help the customer), and particular uses for verbal and nonverbal codes.

Style may be influenced by variables in the speaker and the listener. It may be influenced by personality and the purpose and setting of the communication. For example, hemming and hawing, overusing profanity, and cutting off another person who is speaking all indicate the influence of personality on linguistic style. Purpose may also alter one's communication. How one speaks may be influenced by why he is talking, to whom, where, and when. For example, one's style of speech will also vary depending on whether he is in a formal or informal setting (Barber, 1978). Barber (1978) suggests that style can be more effective if the following characteristics are present: accuracy, clarity, appropriateness, economy, and lively quality. He contends that style can be learned through a determined effort.

According to Andersen (1972, pp. 136-137) style is defined as

. . . the way in which thought is expressed. This includes the forms (words) and order of words in which thought is expressed. Style is often used broadly to describe a person's characteristic behavior. When used so, it may include typical patterns of voice and bodily action, organizational patterns, characteristic forms of support, and other mannerisms. . . . Style has been investigated from a variety of approaches. Most investigations have proceeded descriptively, or have compared and contrasted two or more individuals' styles in different situations or media. Frequently, it has been investigated with an eye to making critical judgements about aesthetic quality. Some researchers have also investigated the effects of style on comprehension or attention.

Differences in style have been identified as existing among people, situations, and in terms of an individual's responses to different

situations. For example, Kaplan (1964) classified compositional styles:

1. Literary--approach centered on individual case studies
2. Academic--primarily verbal rather than operational, tends to be jargonistic
3. Eristic--strong emphasis on proof and formal propositions and makes heavy use of experiment and statistics
4. Symbolic--makes use of mathematical formulations
5. Postulational--stresses logical relationships which follow strict rules of validity
6. Formal--no empirical content, focus on formal and logical derivation

In marketing, there have been three studies that have directly examined the style variable. Hayes (1978) investigated role requirements and expectations. He examined the role expectations that buyers in the electric utility industry have for salesmen of electric distribution equipment and found that effective salesmen should have a large role repertoire and be able to adjust their patterns depending on the buying situation. In essence, style would be a function of the large role repertoire and the varying patterns of the buying situation.

A study by Scheibelhut and Albaum (1973) looked at salesperson characteristics from the vantage of self-other orientation theory and found that salesmen had higher social interest and lower self-centrality than the nonsalesman but both were closely connected with empathy. The authors suggested that this instrument for measuring personality traits can also provide insight into the interaction

process. As such, a "self" orientation can be related to one type of style and an "other" orientation to another type of style.

In addition, Stafford and Greer (1965) indirectly examined the style variable when they found that there is a significant difference between independent and dependent persons in their preference of a salesperson. They found that the dependent person prefers a more aggressive salesman but that this preference varies according to the product sold. Stafford and Greer (1965, p. 33) concluded by noting that the overall profile of consumer preferences for salespeople calls forth the characteristics of

. . . friendliness, courteous, pleasant, eager, attentive, prompt, aggressive, interested in being of service, although at the same time he should not be pushy, assertive, domineering, or excitable. It appears that the salesperson in our society may have to tread a fine line between being satisfactorily friendly and eager, and being overly aggressive in dealing with customers.

Being "satisfactorily friendly and eager" and being "overly aggressive in dealing with customers" can both be viewed as forms of style.

Although little has been done in marketing with respect to style, the style variable has frequently been considered within the domain of leadership. Whereas one leader may give orders, demand obedience, and make all the decisions without regard to the opinions of others, another leader may be considerate, request the cooperation of others, and ask their opinions before making decisions. In fact, much of the writing which has been done in the area of leadership style has been primarily concerned with two types of leaders, authoritarian and democratic. The authoritarian leader is task-oriented and structured. The democratic leader is person-oriented

and considerate (Stogdill, 1974). Differences in leadership such as these should affect the group process, effectiveness, and morale (Shaw, 1976).

Pioneering study in leadership styles was conducted by Lewin and his associates (Lewin, Lippett, and White, 1939; Lippett and White, 1952). They observed 10-year-old boys and girls working on hobby projects. Adult leaders were trained to be autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire in conducting group activities. Both the members' and the leaders' behaviors were recorded by trained observers. Given the different leadership styles, markedly different patterns of interaction evolved. Hostility, scapegoating, and aggression were high in the autocratic group. While there was no reliable difference in the number of products produced in the hobby projects, the products of the democratic group were of a superior quality.

Since this pioneering work, many other researchers have examined this area. For example, Christner and Hemphill (1955) found that when the leader was considerate, the friendship, willingness, and confidence of the members increased. In studies on a participatory leader, the data show that participatory leaders have more influence on the group decision, and the followers are better satisfied with the result of the group decision (Hare, 1976).

Bass (1960, 1967) proposed a framework of leadership style which suggested that style can be task-oriented, interaction-oriented, or self-oriented. The task orientation was seen originally as characteristic of persons who in social settings:

will try . . . hardest to help obtain the group's goals, solve its problems, overcome barriers preventing the successful completion of the group's tasks, and who persist at . . . assignments (Bass, 1960, p. 149).

Interaction orientation was defined originally as a person who characteristically is

concerned with the group as a means for forming friendships, sharing things with others, providing the security of "belonging" and helping foster strong interpersonal relationships (Bass, 1960, p. 149).

Self orientation was defined initially as characteristic of a person who is

more concerned about his own needs than those of others . . . more interested in extrinsic reward than intrinsic satisfaction of work. . . . (The group) is the cast as well as the audience before which the self-oriented member airs his personal difficulties, gains in status or esteem, aggresses or dominates (Bass, 1960, pp. 149-150).

Sheth (1976) extended this work of Bass into the area of buyer-seller interactions. He suggested that both buyers and sellers can be categorized into the framework suggested above. However, this conceptualization has not been empirically tested.

In summary, style is defined as an individual's characteristic tendency to choose particular patterns of communication. This choice of a particular style is dependent upon the situation or environment in which an interaction occurs. That is, which styles are used depend on why the individuals are communicating, to whom, when and where.

Style is a critical dimension for understanding communication effectiveness. Communication provides the stimulus for the customer's response and vice versa; and, style may strengthen or draw attention from the material being presented. In effect, style may increase or reduce attention, comprehension, and acceptance. Although there

have been few attempts to examine the question of communication style in the customer-salesperson dyad, the importance of style cannot be argued.

Interaction results. As seen in Figure 7 (p. 27), the use of style contributes to the effectiveness of the interaction, or namely, interaction results. For example, if the salesperson is rude to the customer, that behavior would generally have a negative effect on sales. If he were more friendly and interactive, then the communication between them would probably last longer and lead to more favorable evaluations of the salesperson. Consequently, within the confines of the interaction environment, style is believed to contribute to the interaction results.

The interaction can be assessed in terms of sales results, communication results, and evaluations of the salesperson, product, store, and sales presentation. These elements are discussed below.

Sales results are typically examined in personal sales research. These variables may include the buy/no buy decision and amount and quantity of purchase. For example, Miner (1962) examined sales success as related to emotional and personality traits. He found that certain core characteristics contribute to success and failure in a great variety of sales occupations. Evans (1963) found similarity of attributes apparently increases sales potential. Cotham (1968), however, found that the best producers were older, less educated, and had several years of varied sales experience. Brock (1965) showed that perceived similarity was more effective than expertise

in persuading customers to switch to a lower or higher priced paint. These studies, as well as others, have used sales as a key variable in assessing the success of the customer-salesperson interaction.

Interaction results can also be viewed in terms of communication. Variables such as overall length of interaction, number of interactions, verbal or nonverbal patterns, content categories and frequency, and repeated use of communication rules could be used to assess the effectiveness of interaction. For example, Pennington (1968) used Bales' (1950) categories to examine bargaining in the customer-salesperson interaction. Empathy or "the ability to sense and react to verbal and nonverbal feedback" (David and Webster, 1968, p. 163) is also an important communication variable. If, in addition to sales, a company's objectives were goodwill or service, then assessing interaction results in terms of communication measures could be valuable. As such, communication results may be of greater importance for nonprofit or service organizations. However, this is a viable set of results for examining profit as well as nonprofit organizations. When a communication perspective of the customer-salesperson interaction process is more readily acknowledged and researched, this category of variables will gain in importance and attention.

Interaction results also consist of evaluations of the salesperson, product, store, and sales presentation. In essence, positive evaluations may be associated with future repeat purchases. An interaction consists of more than just buying or not buying a product. The customer also forms opinions about the salesperson, product, store, and presentation given the interaction. For example, Stafford and

Greer (1965) measured evaluations of salespeople in their studies on aggression and dependence. The dependent person tended to prefer a more aggressive salesman. In addition, if the salesperson is honest with the customer, then this favorable experience and set of attitudes may extend to the impressions of the product, store, and even the company. The salesperson may be thought of more favorably if he is friendly and interacts with the customer than if he is abrupt with the customer and fails to treat the customer with respect.

In summary, the results of an interaction can be assessed in terms of three sets of variables: sales results, communication results, and evaluation results. While the sales variables have typically been included in personal sales research, the communication variables have received far less attention. The evaluations of the salesperson, product, store, and sales presentation have also received less attention. This study will examine style in the customer-salesperson interaction in terms of these three sets of variables.

IV. SUMMARY FOCUS OF STUDY VARIABLES

Figure 8 (p. 29) presented the conceptualization of the customer-salesperson interaction process in its entirety as drawn from the literature review. This study, however, revolves around the style variable. It examines the presence of style, effects of style, and the major determinants of style. As such, Figure 11 is provided as a summary of the variables which will be examined. As noted in this exhibit, there are three major sets of variables: style,

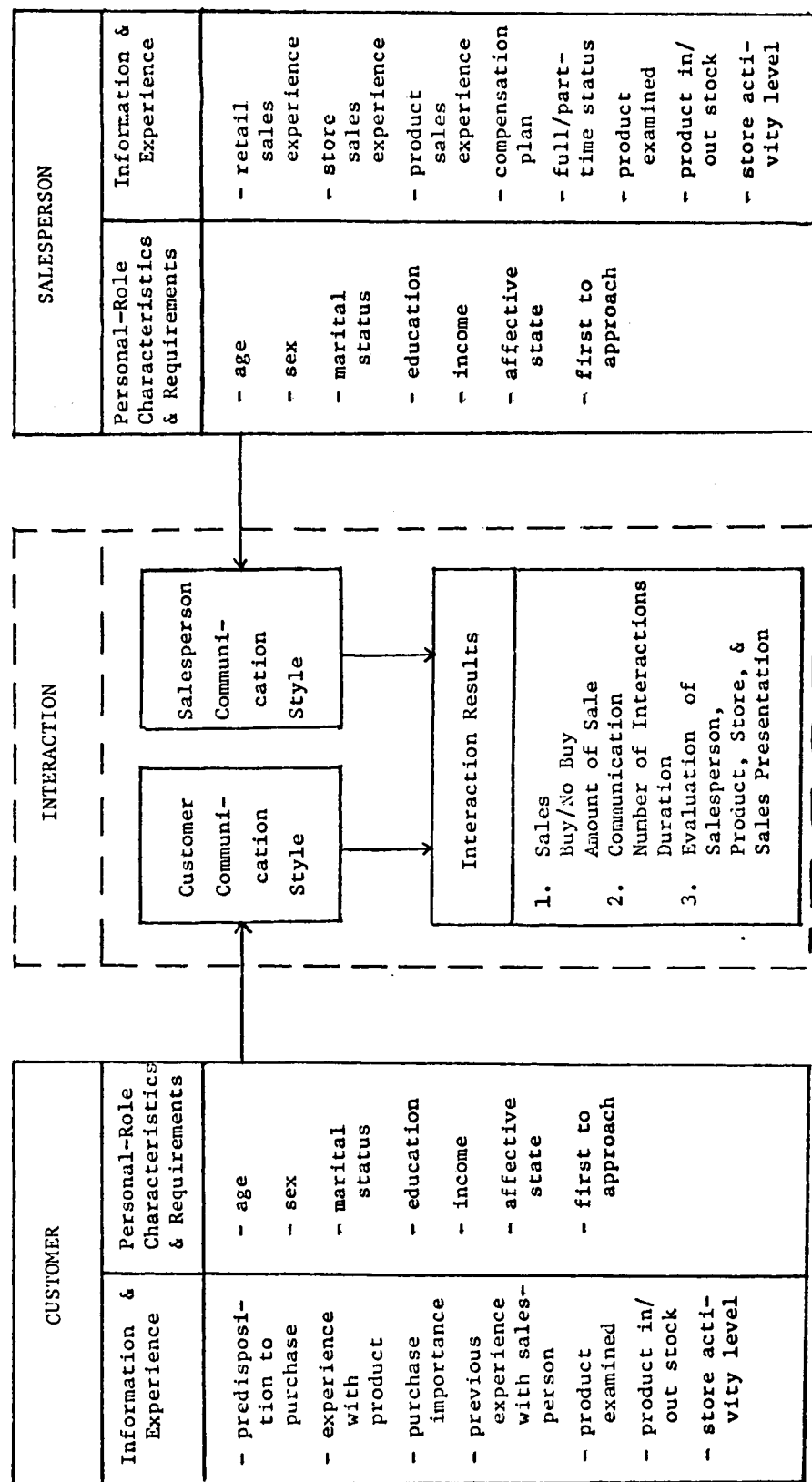


Figure 11. Summary focus of study variables.

interaction results, and customer-salesperson specific variables (i.e., personal-role characteristics and requirements and information and experience). While this study centers on the style variable and the variables of the interaction results, additional questions focus on the customer- and salesperson-specific variables, and ask whether or not the style variable is associated with or can be predicted by these personal and situational variables. These variables were chosen because they have been traditionally used in other retail studies and/or logically contribute to and fit into the requirements and needs of the retail selling environment as explained in the following pages.

A review of the style variable has been provided in the literature review. However, several points should be reemphasized. First of all, the style variable has not been examined in the retail selling environment. Sheth (1976) hypothesized its presence and a set of effects, but this has never been tested. The style orientations of self, task, and interaction, however, do have a firm foundation in the social psychology literature.

Secondly, the style variable can be examined from two perspectives. Style can serve as an independent variable. In this perspective, a particular communication style may contribute to the results of an interaction. It may affect sales which occur and the communications. Style may also be viewed as a dependent variable. That is, the use of a particular style by any one individual may be related to certain personal characteristics of that individual, such as age, sales experience, education, and so forth.

Interaction Results

The following sections discuss the interaction results variables. These variables consist of sales results, communication results, and evaluation results.

Sales results. The sales variable is typically used as a dependent variable in sales studies. For example, Evans (1963) found that the more alike the salesperson and prospect were, the greater the likelihood of a sale. He found this to be the case for physical characteristics (age, height), other objective factors (income, religion, education), and variables that may be related to personality factors (politics, smoking). Churchill, Collins, and Strang (1975) used purchase/nonpurchase as the criterion and found that the greater the customer-salesperson similarity, the higher the probability of a sale. A wealth of other studies have directly used the sales variable as a dependent variable (Pennington, 1968; Tosi, 1966; Gadel, 1964; Weitz, 1978; Miner, 1962; Jolson, 1975; and Willett and Pennington, 1966).

Communication results. Interaction results can also be assessed in terms of communication. As noted by Webster (1968, p. 9),

The outcome of the sales call depends upon how well the salesman and the prospect have communicated with each other - how well they have achieved a common understanding that will enable both to fill their needs and achieve their goals.

To achieve a common understanding, interaction must occur. Given specific styles, it may take a greater or lesser number of interactions to bring about mutual understanding. For example, if the style

orientation is that of interaction, then the amount of feedback may be greater than for other styles. In addition, a task-oriented style may have significantly more feedback and interaction than the self-oriented style. The duration of the interaction may also vary, given different styles. For example, the task-oriented salesperson may take more time to explain the features of products or to convince the customer of the merits of the product. The interaction-oriented salesperson, however, may take more time to socialize.

The communication variables used in this study are the number of interactions and the duration of the interactions. These variables have been used in other studies. For example, Chapple and Donald (1947) measured the amount and frequency of verbal activity of one participant under varying verbal behavior patterns of the other. They alleged that the verbal behavior patterns of salespeople correlated with sales success. It must be kept in mind, however, that recording verbal and nonverbal communications via videotaping or whatever is a difficult feat at the retail level. First of all, the customer and salesperson are able to move throughout the store. Measures can be taken by an unobtrusive third person or interviewer as a surrogate who notes the duration of the interaction and the number of interaction feedbacks. While these are not specific measures of the verbal and nonverbal behavior, they can give us some overall summary information on the amount of verbal and nonverbal information. For example, Willett and Pennington (1966) looked at length and velocity in an interaction. They found that the average retail transaction observed lasted twenty-three minutes and that the mean interaction rates for all transactions

were ten acts per minute. As noted from this discussion, the communication variables of an interaction have received less attention than the sales variables.

Evaluation results. Interaction results can also be examined in terms of evaluations of the salesperson, the product, the store, and the sales presentation. Anytime a customer interacts with a salesperson, he forms judgements about the salesperson's various qualities, such as honesty, expertise, and frame of mind. For example, the customer may sense that the salesperson is trying to take advantage of him and talk him into something. The customer may also accept the salesperson's judgement because he perceives that the salesperson has more expertise. Farley and Swinth (1957) tested the relative effectiveness of product and personal sales pitches. They found that the product pitch brought about higher attitudinal ratings for the salesperson as well as the product.

As noted in the Farley and Swinth (1957) study, the communication between the customer and the salesperson may also affect evaluations of the product. For example, if the salesperson does a good job in explaining the product to the customer, then the customer should reflect this in his evaluations of the product and his purchase behavior. If the customer gets irritated at the salesperson, this may very well influence his evaluation of the product. In essence, the salesperson is communicating about the product. Depending on how the salesperson communicates, this knowledge may contribute to or take away from the evaluations of the product. For example, a salesperson may be showing product A and B to a customer. Because he gets a greater return, the

salesperson may favor selling product B. Consequently, he may point out more of the negative features of product A or more of the positive features of product B. In any event, his communications can enhance or detract from the customer's evaluations of the product. Jolson (1975) examined the perceptions of products given canned and flexible sales presentations. He used semantic differentials such as exciting/dull, expensive/inexpensive, useful/useless, and difficult to understand/easy to understand. He found that the customer-specific presentation was not significantly more effective as a value generator or a communication vehicle. Olshavsky (1973), on the other hand, found that the salesperson was able to influence the customer's emphasis on particular evaluative product attributes.

Evaluations of the store may be enhanced or hindered by the communications of the salesperson. These evaluations are closely related to the variable of store image. Store image (Martineau, 1958, p. 48) is "the way in which the store is defined in the shopper's mind, partly by its functional qualities and partly by an aura of psychological attributes."

The retailing literature has recognized that store image is composed of sub-components. Fisk (1961-1962) categorized store image into six components: location convenience, merchandise suitability, value for price, sales effort and store service, congeniality of the store, and past-transaction satisfaction. Kunkel and Berry (1968) decomposed store image into twelve components: price of merchandise, quality of merchandise, assortment of merchandise, fashion of merchandise, sales personnel, locational convenience, other convenience factors,

service, sales promotion, advertising, store atmosphere, and reputation on adjustments. A third framework was suggested by Hansen and Deutscher (1977-1978): dependable products, store is clean, easy to find items, fast check-out, high quality products, high value, fully stocked, helpful store personnel, easy to move through the store, adequate number of store employees, and convenience. Each of these three frameworks includes the personal selling effort. This supports the premise that communication style affects store evaluations.

Communication style may also have an effect on evaluations of the sales presentation. As noted by Webster (1968, p. 12),

A major determinant of the salesman's effectiveness is the quality of the sales presentation he delivers to the prospect. Viewing personal selling as interpersonal interaction suggests that the presentation should be tailored to fit the needs and the expectations of the prospective customer.

If the salesperson can tailor his presentation to fit the needs and expectations of the customer, then the sales presentation is more likely to be evaluated as positive. In Jolson's (1975) study, the sales presentation was evaluated in terms of semantic differentials such as high pressure/low pressure, interesting/boring, warm and friendly/impersonal, and vague/informative. In essence, some styles and/or style combinations may be related to more favorable evaluations of the sales presentation. Favorable evaluations of the sales presentation should be correlated to purchase behavior and subsequent trips to the store.

As such, communication style may indirectly affect sales through the evaluations of the salesperson, product, store, and sales presentation. In addition to affecting the present sale, these

evaluations may affect repeat sales. Also, if the customer speaks favorably about the store to his friends and family, then he may be instrumental in introducing new customers to the store.

Customer-Salesperson Specific Variables

In addition to the impact of style on interaction results, a third set of variables is examined in the study. As noted in Figure 11 (p. 71), this set of variables is salesperson or customer specific. They are the personal-role characteristics, information, and experience which may affect which type of style is used by an individual.

The personal-role characteristics and requirements which are examined in this study consist of age, sex, marital status, education, income, affective state, and who is the first member of the dyad to approach the other member. The demographic variables have been used in other sales studies (Churchill, Collins, and Strang, 1975; Newman and Staelin, 1972; McGuire, 1976; Whyte, 1948; Evans, 1964; Gadel, 1964; Stafford and Greer, 1965; and Burck, 1956) while affective state is a variable which is typically ignored in the interaction. However, the way a salesperson feels can affect the way in which he communicates. If the salesperson's mood is worse than usual, he may be less interactive and more concerned about himself than the customer. Or, he could even be rude or abrupt with a customer. Studies have also examined the consumer in terms of demographics. For example, the intensity of search is likely to be greater when (Katona and Mueller, 1955; Hempel, 1969)

1. The customer is less than thirty-five years of age.
2. The customer is in the middle-income category as opposed to the high- or low-income categories.
3. The customer has a high-school education or better.

Likewise, various demographic variables are expected to be associated with the different styles of communication. Whether the salesperson is the first to approach or vice versa is also expected to be associated with the different styles of communication. A willingness to approach the other person may be indicative of a task-oriented style.

The information and experience variables are also examined in this study. The sets of variables examined are specific to the role of customer or salesperson. For example, the variables examined for the customer include predisposition to purchase, experience with the product, purchase importance, and previous experience with the salesperson. If a customer is predisposed to purchase, then style and compatibility of style should be less important. Also, experience with the product could negate the effects of the salesperson, particularly if brand preference or insistence has been achieved. Purchase importance may also contribute to the type of style used. Also, if the customer and salesperson have interacted a number of times, they may interact differently than they would have otherwise.

The salesperson specific variables are overall sales experience, sales experience with the store, sales experience with the product line, compensation plan, and full or parttime status. Experience is generally associated with sales success. As a person gains experience, no doubt he learns certain styles of communication which are more effective than others. He also may learn to read the customer and adjust his style accordingly. The compensation plan may also effect

communication style. For example, if a salesperson is paid on a commission basis, he may tend to be task-oriented, whereas a salaried salesperson may tend to be interactive. In addition, if a salesperson works fulltime, then he may tend to be more task-oriented than a part-time salesperson.

Three additional information and experience variables were examined: the product examined, whether the product was in or out of stock, and store activity level. These variables are likely to affect the style of both the customer and the salesperson. For example, if the product is out of stock, then a task orientation would be stifled.

In conclusion, Figure 11 (p. 71) is provided as a summary focus of the variables used in the study. These variables can be grouped into three sets: style, interaction results, and customer-salesperson specific variables. This study emphasizes the style variable and the variables of the interaction results. Subordinate questions center on the customer and salesperson specific variables; more specifically, are these variables associated with or can they predict style?

Even though these three sets of variables are isolated for the purposes of the study, they should be viewed in terms of Figure 8 (p. 29). This figure provides the detailed conceptualization of the customer-salesperson interaction process. The study variables were chosen because little if any work has been done on these variables in relation to the style variable.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The communication style variable is a new area of study. As such, the proposed research is descriptive as well as exploratory in nature. In particular, this research further defines and operationalizes the communication style variable, identifies and describes the extent to which variables are associated with the use of communication style, and makes inferences concerning the associated variables. This study does not examine the causal relationships involved or seek to answer the "why" questions.

The proposed research consisted of a field study wherein local stores were involved in their typical "everyday" business activities, that is, selling their products to their customers. These stores were selling heterogeneous shopping goods, or, more specifically, sporting goods including both equipment and clothing. Each sales agent was doing his typical store duties and, of course, each customer was doing his shopping. As such, this study tried to capture the actual in-store behavior of the customer and the salesperson rather than superimposing a structure or artificial environment on them. Once an interaction between the customer and the salesperson had occurred, then each completed a questionnaire.

The design and methodology section is presented in five parts. The first part is a discussion of the sampling procedure. The second part presents the instruments. A rationale of the analysis

is then presented which is followed by a discussion of limitations and delimitations.

I. SAMPLE

A judgment sample of sporting goods stores was taken by contacting all the stores listed in the yellow pages under the heading "retail sporting goods." Most of the stores which were contacted agreed to participate. Of the fifteen stores that were contacted, thirteen stores participated in the study. (A list of those stores follows.) It should be noted that four of these stores though different in size, offering, and so forth, were under the same ownership. It is recognized that this may have an effect on the generalizability of the results, but they were included to achieve a larger sample size. On the average, each store had two to four salespeople and each salesperson was used in the study. As such, approximately fifteen to twenty interactions were sampled per store. Stores which did not carry a full line of sporting equipment and clothing were excluded. Stores with only one salesperson were also excluded, because this one person was typically the manager as well as the salesperson. His knowing the purpose of the study could bias the results.

The following stores participated in the study:

Athlete's Foot

Athletic House - Cumberland Store

Athletic House - Gay Street Store

Athletic House - Midland Center

Athletic House - Suburban Store

Blue Ridge Mountain Sports

Giff's Sporting Goods - McGhee Street Store

Giff's Sporting Goods - Old Knoxville Highway Store

K-Mart Department Store - Alcoa Store

Outdoor America Outfitters

Racquets and Jackets

Sports Spectrum

Sports Unlimited

Sporting goods stores were chosen for a number of reasons. First of all, these stores tended to carry many brands but in a similar range of goods. The purchase decision was often an individual decision rather than the more complex situation involving two or more people. Also, these products covered a range of prices, with most goods in a moderate price range, and financing was typically not used. Additionally, these transactions were typically completed in one visit as opposed to several, where the overall interaction would be harder to evaluate. In this type store, impulse purchasing tended to be minimized because most people were looking for a particular type of item. The salesperson's job was usually to show them the available merchandise and answer questions.

The sampling procedure which was used is as follows: when a customer left the store, an interviewer asked the customer to complete a questionnaire. The interviewer then asked the salesperson to complete a questionnaire. Thereafter, the interviewer completed a third questionnaire about his observations of the overall interaction. The interviewer questionnaire served as a check on validity as well as a

record of the number of interactions, store activity level, whether the customer or the salesperson was the first to approach the dyad member, and the overall length of the interaction. When the salesperson, the customer, and the interviewer had completed their questionnaires, a different salesperson and his corresponding customer became the next subjects.

The interviews were held at different times of the day during the typical operating hours of 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. or 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Overall, the sample consisted of 251 customers and 64 salespeople. Each salesperson was typically involved in a maximum of five interviews. This was to minimize the salesperson's learning effect as well as to get a variety of salespeople so that differences in the salesperson's style could be assessed.

II. INSTRUMENTS

The instruments consisted of two self-administered questionnaires, one for the salesperson and one for the customer. The salesperson completed a questionnaire with scale items which were used to categorize the customer into one of the categories of style: task, interaction, or self. He also evaluated the effectiveness of his presentation and supplied information on his previous experience, compensation plan, and other personal characteristics. Additionally, the salesperson reported the sales results of the interaction. The customer was asked to complete a questionnaire with similar scale items which were used to categorize the salesperson into one of the categories of style. He also evaluated the product and provided information on previous experience and other personal characteristics.

The scale items differentiating the three styles were developed from the work of Bass (1960, 1963, 1967, and 1977). Bass' inventory consisted of twenty-seven statements or questions regarding attitudes and opinions to which the examinee responded by choosing both the most and least preferred of three alternatives. The three alternatives dealt with the value of groups, personal needs, and the projection of one's values, so that one statement was most likely to be accepted by the self-oriented examinee, one statement was most likely to be accepted by the interaction-oriented examinee, and one statement was most likely to be accepted by the task-oriented examinee. These triads were scored in the same manner as the Kuder Preference Record, requiring the examinee to choose in each triad the one alternative he preferred most and the one he preferred least (Bass et al., 1963).

Bass revised the inventory three times following independent internal consistency item analysis. Twenty-seven triads formed the final revision with estimated odd-even reliabilities of .50 for self orientation, .70 for interaction orientation, and .64 for task orientation (N=100). The test-retest correlations were self, .73; interaction, .76; and task, .75 (Bass et al., 1963).

Bass' work discussed several underlying characteristics which typify each of the three styles. These characteristics can be grouped into several categories based on their similarities. These categories are listed below.

Characteristics of Self-Oriented Style

The characteristics of the self-oriented individual's style were categorized into four similar dimensions. This individual (1) likes

direct personal reward, recognition, and respect; (2) uses group participation as a vehicle to satisfy his own needs; (3) is concerned with himself; and (4) is aggressive and dominating. Listed in Appendix A are quotes from Bass' work (1960, 1963, 1967, and 1977) which support each of these four dimensions.

Characteristics of Task-Oriented Style

The characteristics of the task-oriented individual's style were categorized into three similar dimensions. This individual is (1) interested in task completion; (2) concerned with effective and outstanding performance; and (3) persistent and hardworking. Listed in Appendix A are quotes from Bass' work (1960, 1963, 1967, and 1977) which support each of these three dimensions.

Characteristics of Interaction-Oriented Style

The characteristics of the interaction-oriented individual's style were categorized into two similar dimensions. This individual (1) seeks and enjoys interaction and (2) is concerned with executing and maintaining personal relationships. Listed in Appendix A are quotes from Bass' work (1960, 1963, 1967, and 1977) which support each of these two dimensions.

The scale items which were used in the salesperson and customer questionnaire were taken directly from the above dimensions and their supporting quotes. As such, the dimension and items for the salesperson and the customer are depicted in Appendix B.

The customer and salesperson items provided the basis for the scale scores. Each salesperson and customer had three scale scores:

a measure of task-oriented style, a measure of self-oriented style, and a measure of interaction-oriented style. These scores were computed by adding the numbers each respondent had circled (1—strongly agree, 2—agree, 3—uncertain, 4—disagree, 5—strongly disagree) for each of the three styles and dividing by the number of items (either six or seven). As such, each of the three mean scores ranged from one to five.

The salesperson provided information other than the scale items. For example, he provided additional information on his previous experience in retail sales, in the store, and with the product line; his affective state (i.e., feeling better than usual, about the same, or worse than usual); compensation plan; amount of purchase; if the product was in or out of stock; and his demographics, consisting of marital status, sex, education, age, and income (see Appendix C). Following is a list of the measures which were recorded from the salesperson:

Style ratings of the customer

Product in/out of stock

Buy/no buy decision

Amount of sale

Affective state

Retail sales experience

Store sales experience

Product sales experience

Compensation plan

The customer was asked to provide information concerning his experience with the product. That is, he was asked what product he was

shopping for, whether he had previously owned the product, whether it was the same brand, whether he thought he would like the product he had bought or examined, how certain he was that he would make a purchase before he came into the store, and how important this purchase decision was in relation to other purchase decisions. The customer was also asked to indicate his affective state and how well he knew the salesperson before their interaction in the store. Finally, the customer supplied the same demographic information as the salesperson (see Appendix C). Following is a list of the measures which were recorded from the customer:

Style ratings of the salesperson

Product shopped for

Previous product experience

Product evaluations

Purchase importance

Predisposition to purchase

Previous experience with salesperson

Affective state

Demographics

A third questionnaire was completed by the interviewer. It consisted of style ratings for both the customer and the salesperson. Because these ratings were used as a validity check, the items duplicated the dimensions on the customer and salesperson questionnaires. The interviewer also recorded the time when the customer entered the store, the time of the first verbal exchange, and when the customer left the store. He also recorded the number of interactions between the

customer and the salesperson, who was the first to speak, and the activity level of the store (see Appendix C). Below is a list of the items which were recorded by the interviewer:

Style ratings of the customer

Style ratings of the salesperson

Time in store

Time in transaction

Number of interactions

First to approach

Store activity level

The above customer, salesperson, and interviewer variables were also discussed in the "Summary Focus of Study Variables" (pp. 70 to 80). In this summary, Figure 11 (p. 71) depicts each of these variables as they relate to one another. For the reader's convenience, Appendix D is provided to show which items are used to measure each of these variables.

III. RATIONALE OF ANALYSIS

The Rationale of Analysis section is presented in three parts: style measurement, style importance, and style similarity and compatibility. The analyses are discussed in terms of the statistical techniques which were used and their purpose. At the end of the section, a summary figure is presented which overviews each step of the analysis in terms of its relationship to the entire study.

Style Measurement

The first step of the analysis was to examine the reliability of the proposed scales. Cronbach's coefficient alpha (1951) was used to test the internal structure of the three style scales. This alpha was the mean of all split-half coefficients resulting from different splittings of a scale. As such, alpha was an estimate of the correlation between two random samples of items from a universe of items like those in the scale. Alpha is an approximate index of equivalence and, except for very short tests, of the first-factor concentration in the test. Also, inter-item and item-scale correlations were computed. Based on these analyses, those items which lowered the value of Cronbach's alpha, which did not result in the expected (positive) inter-item correlations, or which did not discriminate among the different scales, were deleted.

The second step of the analysis was to examine the univariate relationships in the data. Summary statistics, means, standard deviations, frequencies, and proportions were computed for the average style scores across all respondents in order to show which styles were more prevalent. These same statistics were also computed for the customers as a group and for the salespeople.

Correlations were examined between the average style scores and predispositions to purchase, experience with the product and the salespeople, purchase importance, demographics, sales experience, compensation plan, affective state, store activity level, who was the first to approach, and the interaction results. These correlations were calculated to show whether the existence of style was related to

any particular demographics, predispositions, attitudes, and/or past experiences. These analyses were performed for the entire sample as well as for the sub-samples of customers and of salespeople.

The next step of the analysis focussed on developing a taxonomy of style mixes. By using his summated score on each of the three style scales, each respondent was characterized by his style profile. For example, one respondent could have been characterized as high on the use of task-oriented and interaction-oriented style, and low on the use of the self-oriented style; while another could have been high on interaction, medium on self, and low on task. In other words, different individuals could have been characterized by their differential use of style mixes. Thus, the customers and salespeople were classified into homogeneous groups of style mixes through the use of two separate cluster analyses, one for the customers and one for the salespeople. Cluster analytic procedures have been widely used for this type of analysis (Frank and Green, 1968). The procedure has been to first determine "natural groupings" of the individuals based on within-group similarity of their style profiles and then to examine the groups in terms of stereotypical modal patterns of style used by each group. The mean profile of each group is described and contrasted across groups to determine whether or not various personal characteristics or experiences are related to the use of style mixes by customers and salespeople. This procedure provides insight into which variables are important in structuring the type of style used.

Multiple discriminant analysis was used to test the significance of the relationships between the personal variables and the use of a

style mix and to further classify the nature of the underlying dimensions which differentiated among the groups. The multidiscriminant analysis was a procedure which provided a weighted combination of a set of independent variables (in this case, such things as age, income, experience, and so forth) to provide a function which maximally discriminated between the groups (Overall and Klett, 1972). In essence, it answered the question: do the clusters differ, and, if so, what is the nature of these differences?

Style Importance

Whereas the analyses described above concerned the measurement of style, the next part of the analysis concerned style importance. In assessing style importance, the effectiveness of the different styles or style combinations was tested. First, a chi-square analysis was used to test the effect of style on the buy/no buy sales decision. The chi-square examined the difference between the expected and the observed frequencies of the buy/no buy decision for the style mixes. For example, it was anticipated that one or more styles (e.g., interaction and/or task) may have a significantly greater number of observed buy decisions than expected. As such, the following null hypothesis was tested:

H_0 : There is no significant difference between the observed and the expected frequency of the buy/no buy decision among the style-mix groups.

The value of a sale was also recorded. Consequently, these values were used as the basis of an analysis of variance among the three groups. For example, the interaction style group could be expected to have a

higher mean sales level than the task- or self-oriented groups. The null hypothesis for this analysis was:

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the mean sales value among the style-mix groups.

Secondly, an analysis of variance was used to test whether the length of the interaction or the number of interactions between the customer and the salesperson varied significantly among the groups. For example, the interaction style could have contributed to longer interactions and greater use of feedback between the customer and the salesperson. The null hypotheses for examining communication results were as follows:

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the length of interaction among the style-mix groups.

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the mean number of interactions among the style-mix groups.

Also, evaluations of the product were examined. Once again, an analysis of variance was used to assess the differences in the group means for evaluations. It was expected that evaluations would vary, given the style used. As such, the null hypothesis was as follows:

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the mean evaluation of the product among the style-mix groups.

The relationship between the use of style and the customers' evaluations of the salesperson, store, and sales presentation were examined indirectly. (Product evaluations were included again in this part of the analysis.)

A random sample of three stores from the original thirteen stores was chosen. This substudy examined the customers' evaluations of the salesperson, the sales presentation, the store, and the product the

customer examined or purchased. Customers were also asked if they would shop in the store again and the amount of the sale (see Appendix C). Hence, this corollary study was conducted to see if the customers' evaluations were associated with sales or return trips to the store. If these evaluations are related to sales, then their relation to style may be similar to that of sales. This would indicate a need for further research in this area.

Style Similarity and Compatibility

The final part of the analysis dealt with style similarity and compatibility. An analysis of variance among the groups of similar dyads assessed whether or not interaction results were affected by similarity. For example, the mean interaction results were expected to be significantly greater for similar dyads as opposed to dissimilar dyads. The null hypothesis was:

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the mean interaction results among groups of similar dyads.

The study of style compatibility looked for patterns in the match between the customer and salesperson—for example, a task-oriented salesperson matched with a self-oriented customer, an interaction-oriented salesperson matched with a task-oriented customer, and so forth. These combination dyads were examined utilizing analysis of variance to determine whether any one combination was more effective than another in terms of interaction results. The null hypothesis was:

H_0 : There is no significant difference in the mean scores on interaction results among groups of compatible dyads.

In summary, analyses were conducted to examine the style measurement, style importance, and style similarity and compatibility objectives. An overview of the individual analyses and their relationship to the overall study is provided in Figure 12.

IV. LIMITATIONS

Response Error

Response error occurred in the collection of information from an individual if the reported value differed from the true value. This study had the typical limitations of a field study. In specific, the results of the study may be confounded by the obtrusiveness of the interviewer. For example, the presence of the interviewer may have altered the behavior of the salesperson, in particular, but also the customer. Also, the salesperson may have felt that the results of the study were connected to his pay and that may have altered his behavior and his responses accordingly. The customer may have felt he was being watched and/or followed. In any case, the respondents may have been unwilling to respond accurately to certain items. Additionally, the respondents may have been unable to accurately perceive and/or recall just exactly what took place. Some of these problems were minimized by a set of guide rules and by training the interviewer. Customers were not "bird-dogged," and the salesperson was on his own. Hopefully, this resulted in honest responses. While completing the questionnaires, the salesperson and customer were also out of the range of one another.

Scale reliability referred to the extent to which the scaling results were free from experimental error and therefore were able to

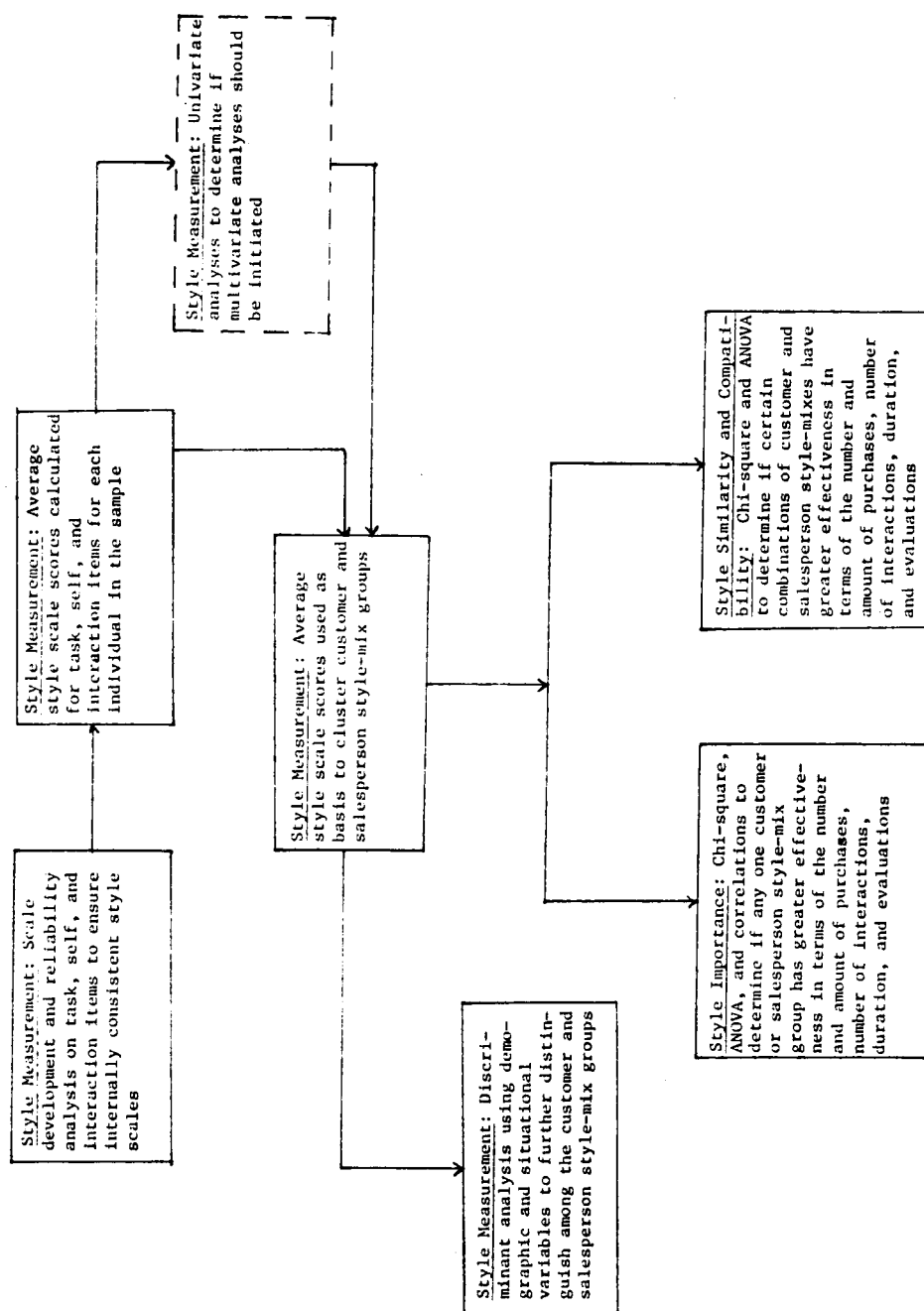


Figure 12. Summary of analyses.

attain consistent results. As described earlier, a number of steps were taken to assure that the scales were reliable at a level at least comparable with generally accepted conventions in marketing research.

The validity of such sales was more difficult to assess. Additional external measures of style were available via the interviewer; therefore, it was possible to assess the convergent validity of the scales. Thus, the evaluation of the validity of the style measures was not limited to construct validity and content validity. The construct validity was examined in looking at the inter-item and item-scale correlations. As discussed earlier, an effort was made to assure the content validity of the scales. The style categories of interaction, self, and task orientation were founded on personal experience, retail interviews, and an extensive review of the marketing and social psychology literature. Style has been viewed in terms of cognitive style, life style, composition style, and leadership style. Leadership style has proved a more fruitful approach to the neophyte interpretation and examination of communication style.

In terms of external validity, the results probably have a higher level of accuracy and generalizability for the city in which the study was conducted than for a more generalized or larger population. As such, extreme caution would be needed in generalizing the study results to sporting goods stores overall and/or to retail selling situations.

Nonresponse Error

Nonresponse error may also have been a limitation in the study. Certain customers may not have wanted to take the time to answer or complete a questionnaire, whereas others may have been more cooperative

in completing a questionnaire. Several steps were taken to minimize this nonresponse error. For example, the questionnaires were kept reasonably short and simple. Also, the interviewer was trained to emphasize the importance of accurately and completely finishing the questionnaire. Eighty percent of the customers completed a questionnaire. Those who did not complete a questionnaire were typically in a hurry to get somewhere (e.g., the soccer game, practice, and so forth) or did not want to "mess with" filling out a questionnaire. These non-responses may have biased the results because, at least intuitively, the first type of customer would seem more task-oriented while the second type of customer would seem more self-oriented. As such, in spite of the precautions taken, the results may have been biased due to non-response error.

With regard to nonresponse error for the stores, two stores were unable to participate in the study. In the first case, participation was prevented by a change in management; and, in the second case, the store had a corporate policy which restricted in-store interviews. These exclusions may have biased the results; but given the number and the variety of the stores which participated in the study, this potential for bias was probably minimal.

Sampling Error

Due to the sampling procedure, sampling error may have occurred. Sampling error occurs when not everyone in the population is included. As such, sampling error in this study may have occurred on two levels: the sample of customers and the sample of stores. A convenience sample of customers was taken. However, the sampling procedure was conducted

via rules for choosing which dyads to sample. Those customers who came into the store while an interaction was already in process and was being monitored by an interviewer were excluded from the sample. The next customer to enter the store after the completion of this interaction would be interviewed. As such, some customers were not asked to participate in the study when an interaction was already being monitored. Thus, this sample was in some aspects a judgment sample as well as a convenience sample.

A judgment sample of stores was used in the study which may have contributed to sampling error. To minimize this error, however, all full-line sporting goods stores in the yellow pages were contacted. Sampling error may have also occurred due to printing errors in the yellow pages and to exclusions of new listings. In addition, four stores were used from the same chain of ownership. While these stores were also contacted through the yellow pages, similarities in these stores may have confounded the results.

Measurement Limitations

Scaling procedures often entail the use of ordered metric scales wherein adjacent intervals can be ordered. This ordering has caused and/or allowed many researchers to use interval level analyses. However, it is recognized that the extension of a lower level measurement scale to an interval or ratio level measurement scale may cause assumptions in the various analyses to not be met.

In addition, it is recognized that the use of nonstandardized scores may have an effect on the magnitude of the combining weights in the discriminant analysis. While this does not affect the style scores,

it may have an effect on the magnitude of the demographic and situational variables.

V. DELIMITATIONS

It was generally recognized that an individual's personality, life style, motivation, and so forth, partially shaped his interpersonal skills. However, the determination of these effects was beyond the scope of this study.

The style scales were formulated on the basis of an extensive review of the marketing, communication, and social science literature, and further substantiated through a number of personal interviews. However, it was also recognized that there may have been other dimensions of style which were not tapped by these scales.

In addition, the complex relationship between the style groups and the results of the interaction was partially examined. As such, a further study is needed to examine this relationship via the scales developed in this study.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the analysis and results from the proposed field study of customer-salesperson interactions. It is composed of three sections: style measurement, style importance, and style similarity and compatibility.

I. STYLE MEASUREMENT

This section of analysis assesses whether or not communication styles and/or style mixes exist, if they can be measured, and what variables describe individuals using the various styles and/or style mixes. As such, the development of the style scales is first discussed. Thereafter, the style groups and the variables which discriminate among these groups are presented. The reader is referred to Appendix F for a discussion of the various univariate and correlational results.

Scale Development

To increase validity and reliability, the scales were developed through a number of procedures. First of all, the scales were based on Bass' Orientation Inventory (1960, 1967) as detailed in Chapter III. This foundation ensured that each of the dimensions of style would be included in a manner consistent with past research.

However, several additional precautions were taken. For example, once the questionnaire was assimilated, given Bass' work, the questionnaires were taken into a retail store for in-depth interviews

with the salespeople. In these interviews, an interviewer went through each item on the questionnaire and recorded the salesperson's interpretations, questions, and comments about each item. Several customers were also asked to interpret and comment on their questionnaires. In turn, the recorded comments were used to clarify and simplify the questionnaires.

Following these in-depth interviews, a pretest was administered. The pretest took place in three smaller, low-traffic sporting goods stores. These stores were chosen because they provided an environment in which the interviewers could become acclimated to their questionnaires, to locating themselves in the store, to timing the interaction, and so forth. In addition, the salespeople had ample time to complete their questionnaires due to the slow to moderate flow of customers. Due to the in-depth interviews, very few changes were needed in the pretest. As such, these data were included in the overall study data.

Results of reliability analysis. The reliability of the three scales was examined via Cronbach's coefficient alpha (1951). This analysis showed that both the salesperson and the customer scales were reliable. The responses on all of the items were first analyzed by computing inter-item correlations, influence scale reliability estimates via Cronbach's alpha, and item-scale correlations as a criterion. Based on these analyses, those items which lowered the value of Cronbach's alpha, which did not result in expected inter-item correlations, and which did not discriminate among the different scales were deleted from further analyses.

The resulting salesperson items which classified the salespeople into task-oriented, self-oriented, and interaction-oriented styles of communication had overall alphas of .76, .64, and .81, respectively. Although the self scale had a lower alpha, this alpha is within the generally accepted benchmark of .60 (Overall and Klett, 1972).

The items which classified the customer into task-oriented, self-oriented, and interaction-oriented styles of communication had overall alphas of .86, .58, and .89, respectively. The self scale reliability is again lower than the task and interaction scale reliabilities but sufficient for the .60 benchmark.

The item-scale correlations for the customer and the salesperson are shown in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. (The adjusted item-scale correlations for the customer and the salesperson items are shown in Tables E-1 and E-2 (see Appendix E)). The item-scale correlations for both the customers and the salespeople are in the expected direction. In Tables 1 and 2, the reliability diagonals (marked off in boxes) are stronger than the off-diagonal items, offering evidence of the discriminate validity of these scale items. It should be noted that the item-scale correlations for the customer's and the salesperson's self items are also lower than the task or interaction correlations. These correlations suggest that the self scale for both the customer and salesperson is consistent but less robust than the task and interaction scales.

An additional reliability analysis was done on the interviewer questionnaire as a check on the validity of the customer and salesperson responses. The items which classified the customer's style of

TABLE 1

UNADJUSTED ITEM-SCALE CORRELATIONS FOR THE CUSTOMER ITEMS

Customer Items	Scale		
	Task	Self	Inter- action
This customer wanted to complete his shopping as effectively as possible	.83	-.09	.19
This customer wanted to finish the shopping task	.84	-.00	.15
This customer tried hard to complete the shopping task	.82	.04	.15
This customer's main concern was to finish his shopping	.81	.07	-.03
This customer's primary concern was to make a purchase	.62	-.06	-.03
This customer talked about his own personal difficulties	.05	.54	.19
This customer was forceful	.14	.52	-.01
This customer was primarily interested in what he had to say and not in what I had to say	-.04	.57	-.40
This customer tried to dominate the conversation	.01	.53	-.07
This customer was more interested in himself than in the product or what I had to say	-.09	.60	-.46
This customer tried to impress me with himself	-.05	.65	-.05
This customer really wants to be admired by others	-.06	.19	.10
This customer tried to establish a personal relationship	.04	-.03	.77
This customer seemed interested in me not only as a salesperson, but also as a person	.01	-.15	.84
This customer genuinely enjoyed my helping him	.06	-.29	.77
This customer likes to talk to people	.12	-.13	.82
This customer was easy to talk with	.15	-.24	.80
This customer was friendly	.22	-.27	.75
This customer was interested in socializing	.01	.01	.62

TABLE 2

UNADJUSTED ITEM-SCALE CORRELATIONS FOR THE SALESPERSON ITEMS

Salesperson Items	Scale		
	Task	Self	Inter- action
This salesperson worked hard complete the sale	.80	-.09	.39
This salesperson wanted to do the sales job well	.75	-.20	.58
This salesperson wanted to complete the sale	.75	.01	.24
This salesperson was concerned with doing the best job possible	.57	-.27	.41
This salesperson's primary concern was to help me make a purchase	.52	-.15	.35
This salesperson was forceful	-.02	.50	-.26
This salesperson tried to impress me with himself	-.10	.55	-.14
This salesperson seemed more interested in himself than in me	-.31	.58	-.38
This salesperson really wanted to be admired by others	.14	.48	.05
This salesperson was more interested in what he had to say than in what I had to say	-.23	.70	-.39
This salesperson talked about his own personal difficulties	-.12	.52	-.12
This salesperson tried to dominate the conversation	-.17	.50	-.29
This salesperson genuinely enjoyed helping me	.45	-.28	.72
This salesperson was easy to talk with	.40	-.44	.69
This salesperson tried to establish a personal relationship	.23	-.04	.62
This salesperson was interested in socializing	.24	-.06	.63
This salesperson was friendly	.41	-.39	.63
This salesperson was a cooperative person	.29	-.31	.48
This salesperson likes to help customers	.49	-.32	.68
This salesperson seemed interested in me not only as a customer, but also as a person	.41	-.29	.65

communication into the task, self, and interaction categories had overall alphas of .78, .76, and .91, respectively. The interviewer items which classified the salesperson's communication style into the task, self, and interaction categories had overall alphas of .80, .67, and .83, respectively. As such, the three scales were consistent for the interviewer's ratings of both the customer and the salesperson. These results provided a check of concurrent validity on the customer's and salesperson's responses.

In summary, the results of the reliability analysis show that the three hypothesized styles of communication are measured in a consistent manner. Additionally, the results from the interviewer questionnaire indicate that these measures are not only reliable but also accurate.

Style Taxonomy

The next stage of the analysis was to determine whether groups of customers and groups of salespeople utilized similar style mixes. As noted previously, communication style is defined as a mixture of the three orientations rather than purely one style or another. For example, when a salesperson first approaches a customer, he may be more interactive and personable. As the interaction pursues, he may become more task-oriented. On the other hand, the customer may become more task-oriented and/or self-oriented as the interaction occurs, i.e., talking more about himself so that his needs can be understood and fulfilled.

Customers and salespeople were clustered on the basis of their average style scores. Each individual's average style score was formed

by adding that individual's scores on each of the reliable items from the task, self, and interaction scales and by dividing by the number of reliable items in each scale. As such, each customer and salesperson had an average style score for the task orientation, the self orientation, and the interaction orientation. These three average style scores were then used to cluster the customers and the salespeople in terms of their similarity with regard to style.

A hierarchical cluster analysis was used to classify the respondents into homogeneous style-mix groups. A hierarchical method simply constructs a hierarchy or a treelike structure by placing all objects into groups such that within-group differences are minimized while among-group differences are maximized. While a hierarchical routine tends to be less stable and reliable than a nonhierarchical routine clustering method, it has several advantages which warrant its use. As suggested by Aaker (1976), a hierarchical routine has the advantages of being relatively easy to read and interpret, and the output has a logical structure that may be more interpretable given a theoretical basis. The Howard and Harris (1966) routine creates a hierarchy by partitioning the full set of individuals into two subsets based on a criterion measure related to average within-cluster distance. The subset with the highest within-cluster distances is then divided into two subsets, and so on, until all individuals are eventually placed into unit clusters.

Several criteria were used in the cluster procedure to determine the appropriate number of style-mix groups. First of all, a scree test assessed the incremental decrease in error so that an additional cluster

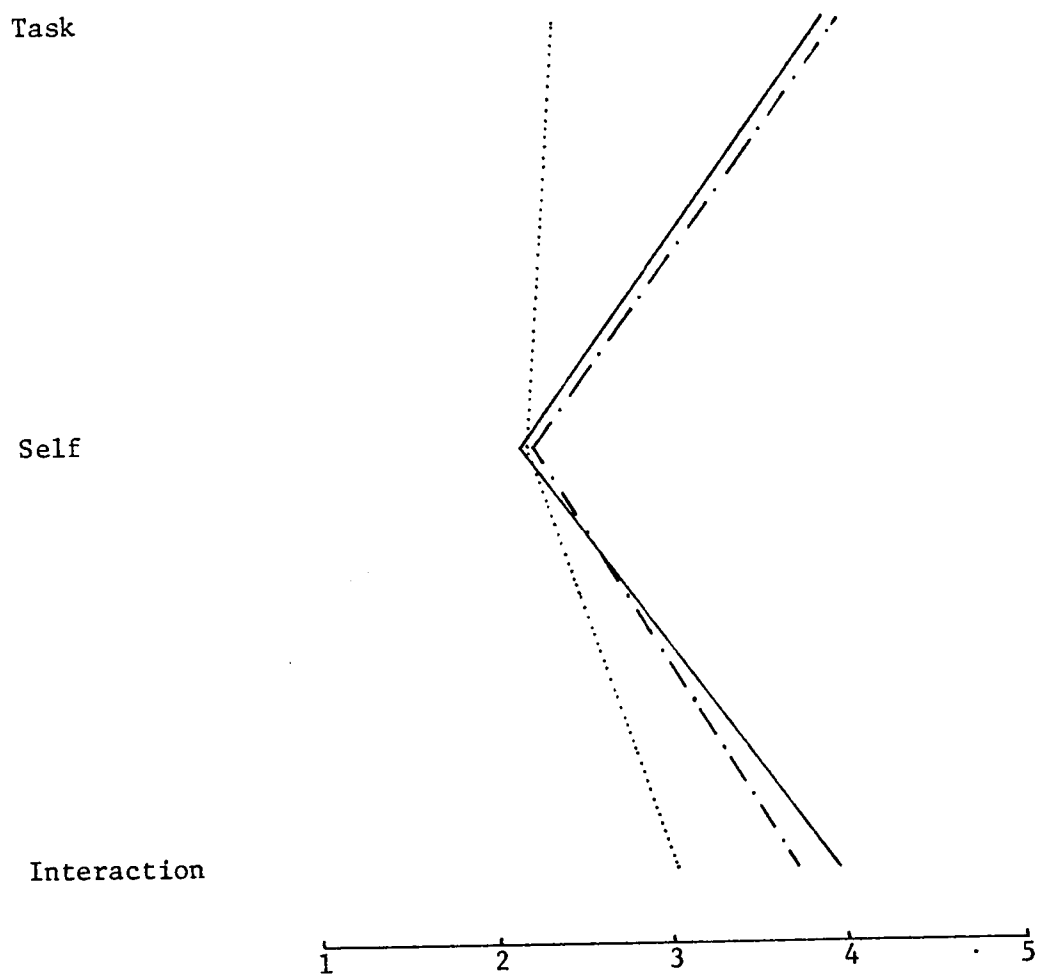
would be used only if it significantly decreased the error. As seen in Figure E-1 and E-2 (see Appendix E), Lambda values, i.e., the ratio of total within-group sum of squares to total group sum of squares, were plotted. The incremental decrease in Lambda values moving from the two-group to the three-group solution warrants the use of the three-group solution. However, a much smaller incremental decrease is gained in moving to a four-group solution. Thus, it appeared that the three-group solution was the best choice. Additionally, the sample sizes for the three-group solution were more balanced than for the other solution. Finally, the three-group solution reflected a more meaningful break in the data than did the two-group or four-group solution.

There are no fully defensible procedures for statistically testing the consistency of the clusters. As such, the number of clusters were determined by a judgmental weighting of the above criteria. In accordance, the results of this analysis suggested that the three-group solution for both the customers and the salespeople should be used for the remainder of the analyses. The next section describes and interprets these groups with regard to the mixes of style used.

Customer style mixes. The customer style mixes are characterized by their mean profiles on each of the three influence scales in Table 3. To facilitate comparison of these groups, the mean profiles are also plotted in Figure 13. The first group of customers may be characterized as the "Interactors." The salespeople indicated that these customers had a high task orientation, a low self orientation, and a high interaction orientation. In fact, this group had the highest interaction

TABLE 3
 STYLE MIXES OF THE CUSTOMERS: MEANS, STANDARD
 DEVIATIONS, AND GROUP SIZES

Style	Group I Interactors (n=91)	Group II Task Completers (n=91)	Group III Browsers (n=69)
Task	3.89 (.28)	3.98 (.22)	2.45 (.21)
Self	2.19 (.23)	2.27 (.20)	2.24 (.11)
Interaction	3.93 (.17)	2.77 (.19)	3.13 (.50)



Legend:

- Group I: Interactors
- - - Group II: Task Completers
- Group III: Browsers

Figure 13. Style mix profile for customers.

score. It was considerably higher than that of the other groups. These scores suggest that the salesperson saw these customers as very personable and sociable. They were easy to talk with and friendly and, hence, acknowledged the sales clerk as a person. Overall, these customers sought and enjoyed interaction. They also made an effort to execute and maintain a personal relationship. At the same time, these customers were interested in completing their shopping as effectively as possible. They were persistent and worked hard to complete their shopping. Additionally, these customers were typified by a low self orientation. Generally, they expressed an interest in the salesperson and, secondly, in the task rather than in themselves.

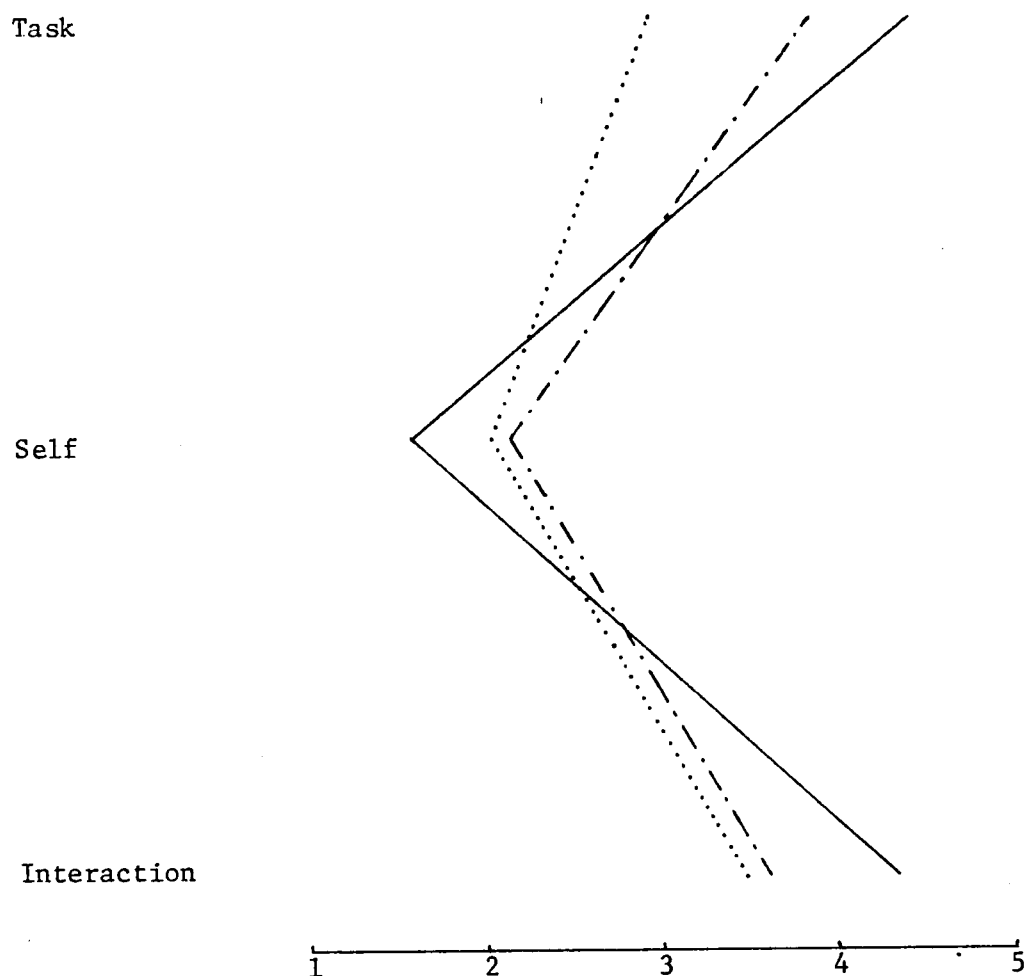
The second group of customers exhibited a style mix composed of a high task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation. These customers were perceived as most interested in completing the task. Their task score (3.98) was over a point higher than their interaction score and almost two points higher than their self score. Their task score was the highest of the three groups. Compared to the "Interactors," however, these customers placed considerably less emphasis on interaction. They were not as interested in talking to people or socializing. These customers may have been somewhat unfriendly or may have been in a hurry and, consequently, may not have had the time or motivation to be more interactive. These customers were also low on the self dimension. Their focus on the task may have precluded any attempt to impress the salespeople or to show concern about themselves. Thus, this group will subsequently be referred to as the "Task Completers."

The analysis identified a third group of customers whose communication style mix consisted of a low task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation. These customers were seen as less concerned with the task than the Group I "Interactors" or the Group II "Task Completers." They were also less interested in interacting. These customers may have been browsing in the store to see what merchandise was available, to compare prices, and so forth. As such, these "Browsers" were less committed to the task and less involved with the salesperson. Also, their self score was low, indicating that a preponderance of self-interest was not detected.

Salesperson style mixes. The mean profiles for the salesperson groups are shown in Table 4 and these values are plotted in Figure 14. The first group of salespeople was high in task, low in self, and high in interaction. On both the task scale and the interaction scale, these salespeople scored higher than the other two groups. These salespeople wanted to help the customer make a purchase. In essence, these "Super Sellers" wanted to complete the sale by doing the best job possible, and, in doing so, they were also perceived as very friendly and cooperative. They treated the customer as a person, not just as someone who would make a purchase. These salespeople were very low on the self dimension. Their communications were focussed on their tasks and their customers rather than impressing their customers, dominating their customers, or using their customers as scapegoats for their own personal problems.

TABLE 4
 STYLE MIXES OF THE SALESPeOPLE: MEANS, STANDARD
 DEVIATIONS, AND GROUP SIZES

Style	Group I Super Sellers (n=112)	Group II Moderate Sellers (n=87)	Group III Inactive Sellers (n=52)
Task	4.38 (.18)	3.80 (.07)	2.87 (.24)
Self	1.63 (.16)	2.19 (.13)	1.97 (.26)
Interaction	4.38 (.13)	3.68 (.10)	3.49 (.35)



Legend:

- Group I: Super Sellers
- - - Group II: Moderate Sellers
- Group III: Inactive Sellers

Figure 14. Style mix profile for salespeople.

The second group of salespeople was characterized by a moderate task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation. These salespeople were perceived as having styles similar to the "Super Sellers," but were more moderate. In other words, these salespeople were seen as being interactive and task-oriented but not as much as the "Super Seller" salespeople. Although these salespeople tried to "make the sale," they were less interactive in doing so. These salespeople can be characterized as the "Moderate Sellers" to distinguish them from the "Super Sellers." In specific, these salespeople may have interacted with customers only when they were asked a question or when they were asked to "ring up" the sale. These salespeople were also typified by a low self orientation.

The analysis revealed a third group of salespeople, who exhibited a relatively low task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation. This group of salespeople were perceived as being the least interactive and also the least task-oriented. Evidently, they were less concerned with being helpful and friendly to the customers. These salespeople were also low on the self dimension. Since these salespeople were less task oriented and less interaction oriented, they may be characterized as the "Inactive Sellers." It seems that these salespeople make a miniscule contribution to the task and to goodwill via interacting with the customers. It may be the case that they simply clock in each day, take their space, and clock out at the end of the day.

In summary, it is clear from Figures 13 and 14 that there are meaningful differences in the mixes of style used by the customers and the salespeople. These style mixes can be labelled as follows:

Customers

- I. Interactors
- II. Task Completers
- III. Browsers

Salespeople

- I. Super Sellers
- II. Moderate Sellers
- III. Inactive Sellers

It should be emphasized that these group names are provided as a convenience to facilitate subsequent discussion, and that the names, in summarizing among group distinctions, cannot capture the full profile information provided in Tables 3 and 4 (pp. 109 and 113) and Figures 13 and 14 (pp. 110 and 114).

Discriminant Analysis of Style Mixes andSituational/Demographic Characteristics

It was hypothesized that certain demographic and situational factors would be salient in terms of structuring the use of a particular style. The customer's characteristics consist of predisposition to purchase, experience with the product and brand, purchase importance, previous experience with the salesperson, whether the product was in stock, store activity level, age, sex, marital status, education, income, affective state, and who is the first to approach. The characteristics of the salespeople consist of retail sales experience, store sales experience, product sales experience, compensation plan, full or parttime status, whether the product is in stock, store activity

level, age, sex, marital status, education, income, affective state, and who is the first to approach.

While some of these variables may appear to be similar to some of the items on the three scales, it should be noted that the style scale scores reflect a measure of actual behavior of one person in the dyad as perceived and reported by the other person. That is, the style ratings for the customer were provided by the salesperson reflecting his perceptions of the customer's behavior; and, the style ratings for the salesperson were provided by the customer reflecting his perceptions of the salesperson's behavior. As such, the style ratings were measures of the one person's perceptions of the other person's behavior. On the other hand, the demographic and situational variables were self-report measures of attitudes, intentions, past experiences, and demographic information rather than a report of on-going behavior. However, because some of the situational measures reflect shopping experiences, attitudes, and intentions, they are similar in nature to the style items which measure shopping behavior. Therefore, it could be expected that there may be significant results with regard to these variables even though they were actually different measures and were obtained from different sources.

The use of a style mix may be more fully understood by examining the above antecedent characteristics for each of the groups. An initial overview of the situational and demographic differences by style mix is provided by the means and standard deviations in Tables E-3 and E-4 (see Appendix E). In order to test the relationships which exist between these situational and demographic variables and the use of a

style mix, a multiple discriminant analysis was computed. This analysis produced functions of the situational and demographic variables which differentiated among the style-mix groups. These functions are formed as weighted linear combinations of the scale scores for the individual situational and demographic variables. The weights are computed so that the first function provides maximum discrimination among the groups. The subsequent functions explain those differences which were not explained by the preceding function. As noted in Green and Tull (1975), these functions are special transformations of the variables in the original space which maximize the ratio of among-group variation to within-group variation. As such, the discriminant functions summarize the among-group to within-group separation in a lower dimensionality than the original space.

It should also be noted that split-half samples are frequently used in discriminant analyses with the first half of the sample used to obtain the classifying function(s) and the second half of the sample used to test the function's classifying strength. Due to sample size, however, a split-half sample was not utilized in this study.

Separate analyses were done for the groups of customers and the groups of salespeople using both the customer's and the salesperson's characteristics. The use of combined characteristics acknowledges that each individual's part in an interaction is contingent on his own characteristics as well as his perceptions of the other person. The results of these analyses are discussed below.

Customer results. The customer analysis reveals two significant functions of the variables which differentiated among the style mixes

of the customers (Tables 5 and 6). In terms of strength, these functions could correctly reclassify 62.9% of the customers into their respective groups. While this is not overly strong, the functions do classify customers better than chance probability. However, it is also recognized that not all of the variation was explained, and, as such, the interpretation of the results is a possible but not absolute interpretation.

On the first function, those variables which are important in distinguishing among the three customer groups consist of predisposition to purchase, customer's sex, the salesperson's retail sales experience, his compensation plan, whether the product is in or out of stock, salesperson's age, and who is the first to approach. If a customer group is on the high end of the continuum, then they are more predisposed to purchase and likely to be female. In turn, the salesperson is likely to be younger, more experienced in retail sales, the first to approach, on a salary plan, and typically has the product in stock. These variables can be viewed as relating to the customer's shopping confidence. For example, if the customer is predisposed to purchase and female (i.e., typically a more experienced shopper), then this customer may have greater shopping confidence. However, the customer's confidence is also contingent on the salesperson. For example, the more experienced salesperson may contribute to the customer's belief that he will be able to satisfactorily complete his shopping. Additionally, the shared experience of the younger salesperson via his participation in sports may also contribute to the customer's confidence in the salesperson's ability to help him find the right product. Also, the customer may be more comfortable in his role if he views the

TABLE 5

DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS FOR CUSTOMER STYLE MIXES WITH
COMBINED CUSTOMER AND SALESPERSON CHARACTERISTICS

Function	Wilks Lambda	df	Significance
1	.585	36	.000
2	.804	17	.000

TABLE 6

DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS FOR CUSTOMER GROUPS: FUNCTION 1 AND
FUNCTION 2 STANDARDIZED DISCRIMINANT COEFFICIENTS BY
COMBINED CUSTOMER AND SALESPERSON CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics	Function 1 Standardized Discriminant Coefficients	Function 2 Standardized Discriminant Coefficients
<u>Customer Characteristics</u>		
Predisposition to purchase	.49163	.19136
Customer's experience with product:		
Same brand	-.02392	-.21214
Purchase importance	.24889	-.05237
Previous experience with salesperson	.04613	.47855
Customer's sex	.39366	-.06813
Customer's marital status	.21742	.31678
Customer's income	-.27712	.14536
<u>Salesperson Characteristics</u>		
Retail sales experience	.44230	-.14943
Store sales experience	-.16311	-.05629
Compensation plan	-.30338	-.02869
Full/parttime status	.06986	.60592
Product in/out stock *	.34097	-.28938
Salesperson's age	-.42090	-.12853
Salesperson's marital status	-.01490	-.35529
Salesperson's education	.18102	.12600
Salesperson's income	-.22555	.14379
Salesperson's mood	.13577	.38532
First to approach *	.38143	-.19418

*These variables may be considered as either customer or salesperson characteristics

salesperson as being supportive, e.g., being the first to approach and being helpful rather than pushy (via his salary plan). If the product is in stock, this may also contribute to the customer's feeling that he can buy the "right" product.

The distinguishing variables of the second function are the customer's previous experience with the salesperson and the customer's marital status; and the salesperson's full or parttime status, his marital status, and his mood. These variables seem to reflect the underlying dimension of personal involvement. The high end of this continuum reflects greater previous experience with the salesperson and typically a married customer. Also, the salesperson tends to be part-time, married, and in a good mood. If the customer knows the salesperson, then he may be more comfortable with communicating on a more personal level. The mood and/or full or parttime status of the salesperson also seems to affect the customer's confidence and, therefore, his use of a particular style. For example, if the customer senses that the salesperson is in a good mood, he may be more comfortable in dealing with the salesperson. Also, if the salesperson works part-time, he may have a greater tendency to chat and to be congenial with the customers rather than taking his job seriously. In doing his job, he may place a greater short term value on "getting to know" his customer. The customer may respond differently to this type of salesperson than one who seems more dedicated to the job. In addition, the customer may feel different with the salesperson who is married than with one who is single.

With regard to the three groups of customers, a visual examination of the means of the preceding variables (Table E-3 in Appendix E) shows

that meaningful differences do exist among the style-mix groups in terms of the combined customer and salesperson variables on the two underlying dimensions. Below, each of the style-mix groups will be discussed highlighting those differences in the situational and demographic variables which have been uncovered in the analysis.

(1) Customer style-mix group I. Examining the shopping confidence of the three groups shows that the "Interactors" were more highly predisposed to purchase and more likely to be female. Knowing what they wanted and being a potentially more experienced shopper could contribute to their shopping confidence. In addition, other differences can be seen by examining the various characteristics of the salespeople who waited on these customers. For example, the "Interacter" was typically waited on by a salesperson who possibly had gained some confidence in his selling abilities via his one to three years of previous retail sales experience. Additionally, the "Interacter" was helped by a younger salesperson who was probably very active in sports and, therefore, very knowledgeable. Also, due to his experience in sales, the "Interacter's" salesperson may have sensed that this customer knew what he wanted and, consequently, feeling that a sale was more probable was likely to approach the customer rather than wait for the customer to approach him. Sensing this confidence, the customer, in turn, may have had greater confidence in the salesperson's ability to help him. The "Interacter's" salesperson also had a compensation plan, i.e., salary plan, which may have made him seem more helpful and less pushy. Overall, it appears as if the "Interacter" was very confident in his shopping skills and abilities. As such, the salesperson who waited on this customer may not

have needed to be overly confident in his selling skills. On the other hand, it seems that he did have enough confidence to approach the customer in order to present the product and the various product attributes.

The Group I "Interacter" was also more personable than the "Task Completer" or the "Browser." He tended to know the salesperson the best. Also, because this customer tended to be married, he may have been more prone to talk with the salesperson on a more personal basis. This analysis suggests that the characteristics of the salesperson who waited on the "Interacter" may have also contributed to this customer's level of personal involvement. In particular, the "Interacter's" salesperson tended to be a parttime employee and in a good mood. As a part-time employee and being in a good mood, he may have been more courteous and friendly with the customer. Overall, the "Interacter" rates high on both the shopping confidence and personal involvement dimensions.

(2) Customer style-mix group II. The Group II "Task Completer" is positioned similar to the "Interacter" on role confidence, but he is low on the personal involvement dimension. The "Task Completer" has a moderate predisposition to purchase. As noted earlier, this may contribute to the customers' beliefs that they will complete the shopping task. In addition, compared to the "Interacter" and the "Browser," this customer is more likely to approach the salesperson first. Additionally, the salesperson's characteristics seem to have a positive impact on the customer's shopping confidence. For example, the "Task Completer's" salesperson has had the most experience in retail sales. These salespeople also tended to be young and, as noted above, this may contribute

to their ability to associate with the sports-minded customer. As with the "Interacter's" salesperson, the "Task Completer's" salesperson is typically compensated on a salary basis, which may encourage him to really try to help the customer, rather than just trying to "make the sale." Additionally, the product is likely to be in stock which may strengthen the customer's confidence in his shopping since he can compare products and attributes.

However, compared to the "Interacter," the "Task Completer" is low on the personal involvement dimension. In particular, the "Task Completer" has had the least amount of previous experience with the salesperson. If he does not know the salesperson, then it is less likely that he will be overly personable with the salesperson. The "Task Completer's" salesperson tends to be full-time, is more likely to be single, and is in a poor mood. Possibly due to his bad mood which may be related to the longer full-time hours, he may be less interested in getting to know the customer. In summary, while the "Task Completer" is a confident shopper, he does not seem to be very personable with the salesperson which may be related in part to the characteristics of the salesperson who is waiting on him. It may be that he is so directed in accomplishing his task that he just does not take the time to be personal.

(3) Customer style-mix group III. The "Browser" is lower on the shopping confidence dimension which may contribute to his lower task orientation. For example, he is the least predisposed to purchase of the three groups. In addition, he is more likely to be male and, hence, an inexperienced shopper. The "Browser's" salesperson also feeds into

the "Browser's" lack of shopping confidence. In particular, he is the oldest of the salespeople and yet has the least amount of retail sales experience. His older age may impair the association between the salesperson and sports enthusiast. Even more important, if the customer perceives his salesperson as not being very knowledgeable, then the customer's confidence may be adversely affected. Also, the "Browser's" salesperson is more likely to be on a combination salary/commission plan and, as such, may have appeared to be more pushy or manipulative. The "Browser's" confidence is reduced further by the product typically being out of stock so that comparison shopping is circumvented. However, because this customer was browsing, it appears as if the salesperson was forced to approach him first.

Although the "Browser" is low on shopping confidence, he does better on the personal dimension. Like the "Task Completer," he is single, but he tends to know the salesperson more frequently than the "Task Completers." He may therefore be more interactive and friendly. However, this customer's salesperson seems to both contribute to and detract from the "Browser's" being more personable. For example, the "Browser's" salesperson is parttime which may contribute to the "Browser's" level of personal involvement via his salesperson's willingness to talk with the customer and his lack of pressures stemming from a full-time position. On the other hand, the "Browser's" salesperson tends to be single and in a poor mood which may detract from the friendliness of the conversation.

Overall, it appears that although the "Browser" may be personally interactive, he seems to be the least concerned with completing the task

at hand. In comparison, the "Task Completer" focusses on shopping to the near exclusion of personal involvement. The "Interacter," on the other hand, demonstrates both shopping confidence and personal involvement.

Salesperson results. The discriminant analysis for the salesperson style mixes using the combined customer and salesperson characteristics does result in a significant function which discriminates among the three groups of salespeople (Tables 7 and 8). In terms of the strength of this function, the classification matrix reveals that 53% of the salespeople can be classified into their appropriate groups. While this is not particularly high, it is better than the chance probability of classifying a salesperson into his respective group. However, the results should be interpreted in light of the fact that a large part of the variation was not explained. The salesperson's function includes two salesperson characteristics, store sales experience and product sales experience; and four customer characteristics, predisposition to purchase, purchase importance, previous experience with the salesperson, and customer's sex. The high end of the continuum consists of salespeople who have more sales experience in the store but less experience with the product. They also wait on customers whom they have dealt with before and who also have a greater predisposition to purchase. However, these customers do not rate the importance of their purchases very high. These customers tend to be female. These variables may be interpreted to represent an underlying dimension of selling confidence. For example, if the salesperson has been selling at a particular store for some time, then he may be more confident of where merchandise is, how

TABLE 7

DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS FOR SALESPERSON STYLE MIXES WITH
COMBINED CUSTOMER AND SALESPERSON CHARACTERISTICS

Function	Wilks Lambda	df	Significance
1	.737	36	.000
2	.956	17	.874

TABLE 8

DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS FOR SALESPERSON GROUPS: STANDARDIZED
DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION COEFFICIENTS BY COMBINED
CUSTOMER AND SALESPERSON CHARACTERISTICS

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Standardized Discriminant Function Coefficients</u>
<u>Salesperson Characteristics</u>	
Retail sales experience	-.19378
Store sales experience	.62835
Product sales experience	-.39238
Compensation plan	.23953
Full/parttime status	-.08711
Salesperson's age	.15953
Salesperson's education	-.14277
Salesperson's income	-.12362
First to approach*	-.07380
<u>Customer Characteristics</u>	
Predisposition to purchase	.55029
Customer's experience with product:	
Same product	.27247
Same brand	.15589
Purchase importance	-.31506
Previous experience with salesperson	.34033
Customer's age	.18559
Customer's sex	.30140
Customer's education	-.10027
Customer's affective state	.25084

*This variable may be considered as either a customer or salesperson characteristic

to approach the store's regular clientele, and what his manager does or does not require of him. Generally greater experience should lead to greater confidence. The salesperson's experience and thereby confidence in selling the particular line of products also discriminates between the styles he may use. Additionally, if the salesperson has dealt with the customer before or if the salesperson senses that the customer is more predisposed to purchase, then he may be more confident of making the sale and adjust his style accordingly. Also, certain salespeople may have greater or lesser confidence helping either males or females. Finally, if the customer regards his purchases as very important, he may be more demanding in his shopping behavior and less willing to accept substitutes. Again, in sensing these differences, the salesperson may have more or less confidence in completing the sale.

In summary, this analysis revealed a significant function which seems to represent the underlying dimension of selling confidence. In a sense, this dimension of selling confidence can be thought of as the equivalent of or complement to the customer's shopping confidence dimension. The differences in mean values (Table E-4 in Appendix E) among the three salesperson style-mix groups are discussed below.

(1) Salesperson style-mix group I. The "Super Sellers" exhibit a greater level of selling confidence than either the "Moderate Sellers" or the "Inactive Sellers." They also have more sales experience in the store and with the line of products than either of the other two groups of salespeople. As such, they probably know the clientele of the store and what the store manager does and does not expect of them and are very familiar with the various sports and sports equipment. The "Super

Seller's" customer may also contribute to the "Super Seller's" confidence by his characteristics and various shopping behavior. For example, the "Super Seller's" customer is the most likely to consider his purchase important. As such, he will probably be very attentive to the salesperson who is helping him. Additionally, his customers, who are frequently female, are most certain that they will make a purchase. In turn, the "Super Seller" may perceive his customers' certainty and be more diligent in working with his customers. This customer probably knows what he wants and may even direct the salesperson to that end. Also, this salesperson has had the most previous experience with his customer, which would undoubtedly contribute to his confidence in meeting his customer's needs.

In summary, the "Super Seller" exhibits a strong sense of role or selling confidence. This apparent confidence may be due to both the salesperson's own experiences as well as to his customer's characteristics.

(2) Salesperson style-mix group II. The "Moderate Seller" is less confident than the "Super Seller." He has less store sales experience and may not know what is required of him in the store and/or be familiar with the regular store customers. In addition, he is less knowledgeable with regard to the product. As such, the "Moderate Seller" is less confident than the "Super Seller" strictly on the basis of the salesperson's characteristics. However, the behavior of the "Moderate Seller's" customer also contributes to his salesperson's lesser degree of confidence. For example, the "Moderate Seller's" customer is moderately certain of what he wants, and the product is only

moderately important to this customer. Also, the "Moderate Seller" is less likely to know his customer than the "Super Seller." As such, the "Moderate Seller" may be less confident with himself and; furthermore, his customer's uncertainty may further reduce his confidence in making a sale. Overall, the "Moderate Seller" has a moderate degree of selling confidence. That is, he is less confident than the "Super Seller" but more confident than the "Inactive Seller."

(3) Salesperson style-mix group III. The "Inactive Seller" is similar to the "Moderate Seller" in that he is less confident in his selling role than the "Super Seller." The "Inactive Seller" has the lowest store sales experience and the lowest product sales experience. In addition, the "Inactive Seller's" customer rates his purchase as being less important than the other customers rate theirs. Also, this customer is the least certain that he will make a purchase. Consequently, this customer may not give off the cues that would encourage the salesperson to persist in assisting him. In addition, the "Inactive Seller" does not usually know his customer and, as such, may be less at ease with the customer. In summary, the Group III salesperson is apparently low in selling confidence due to his own characteristics and those of his customer.

Overall, the three groups of salespeople can be distinguished on the selling confidence dimension. The "Super Seller" has the highest level of confidence followed by the "Moderate Seller" and the "Inactive Seller," respectively. The "Moderate Seller" and the "Inactive Seller" both appear to be less confident in their own selling abilities but in addition, they wait on customers who contribute to their lessened

degree of confidence. This is particularly true of the "Inactive Seller." As such, it appears as if the salesperson and his respective customer affect each other's behavior.

With regard to the overall multiple discriminant results, the results of the analyses are summarized below. The first analysis revealed that the three customer groups can be differentiated via several variables which seem to represent the underlying dimensions of shopping confidence and personal involvement. With regard to the salesperson groups, the second analysis found evidence of a selling confidence dimension that differentiates among the style mixes of the salespeople. It is interesting to note that one of the underlying dimensions found in these analyses was similar for both the customers and the salespeople. That is, both the salesperson's and the customer's style seemed to be associated with role or task confidence. For example, the salesperson's style appeared to be related to his job requirements and, the customer's use of style was related to a task focus. However, the customer style also included a more personal aspect. The salesperson appeared to be friendly but only as required by his role. Because he was in the work place, he did the work that his job required. On the other hand, the customer may have been more at will to either shop leisurely or to "work" at his shopping.

In addition, the analysis demonstrated that the salesperson's style is, to some extent, dependent on various customer characteristics of the salesperson. As such, the interaction which occurred between the customer and the salesperson was a cross product of both their communication styles.

In summary, the style measurement section of the analysis and results chapter assesses whether or not style mixes exist, if they can be measured, and what variables discriminate between the individuals using these style mixes. Tables 9 and 10 summarize the style measurement results for the customers and the salespeople, respectively. These results show that style mixes for the customers and salespeople exist and can be consistently and accurately measured. In addition, several variables are isolated which differentiate among these style-mix groups. It should be noted, however, that these variables explained only a portion of the variation in the style-mix groups and, therefore, the preceding interpretation of these results is suggestive in nature rather than definitive.

II. STYLE IMPORTANCE

Given that style can be accurately and reliably measured, this section of analyses assesses whether or not the style variable is important. That is, does style contribute to communication effectiveness and, more importantly, do certain styles lead to greater sales? If specific communication styles contribute to greater sales, then salespeople could be trained to better utilize these styles. It might also be possible to hire salespeople who seem to be more adept at using one style or another. Also, if certain customer styles are associated with greater sales, then it may prove valuable to teach salespeople to recognize the customers' use of these styles and to communicate effectively with these customers. In assessing importance, the effectiveness of the different styles or style combinations is tested in terms of sales results, communication results, and evaluation results.

TABLE 9
STYLE MEASUREMENT: SUMMARY RESULTS FOR CUSTOMERS

Group Name	Style Mix	Combined Situational Characteristics	Combined Demographic Characteristics	Underlying Dimensions
Group I - Interactors	High task Low self High inter- action	Customer: Most predisposed to purchase Most likely to know the salesperson Salesperson: Moderate retail sales experience Greater use of salary plan Salesperson more likely to be parttime Product more likely to be in stock Customer more likely to approach salesperson	Customer: More likely to be female Typically married Salesperson: Younger salesperson Least likely to be single Salesperson in good mood	High shopping confidence High personal involvement
Group II - Task Completers	High task Low self Moderate interaction	Customer: Moderately predisposed to purchase Least likely to know salesperson Salesperson: Most retail sales experience Greater use of salary plan Salesperson more likely to be full-time Product more likely to be in stock Customer more likely to approach salesperson	Customer: More likely to be male Typically single Salesperson: Younger salesperson Salesperson most likely to be single Salesperson in poor mood	High shopping confidence Low personal involvement
Group III - Browsers	Low task Low self Moderate inter- action	Customer: Least predisposed to purchase Moderate likelihood of knowing salesperson Salesperson: Least retail sales experience Greater use of combination plan Salesperson more likely to be parttime Product more likely to be out of stock Customer usually approached by salesperson	Customer: Most likely to be male Typically single Salesperson: Older salesperson Salesperson likely to be single Salesperson in poor mood	Low shopping confidence Moderate personal involvement

Note: These tables summarize only significant results. However, it should be noted that the strength of these results is limited in that a large amount of the variation in the style-mix groups remained unexplained

TABLE 10
STYLE MEASUREMENT: SUMMARY RESULTS FOR SALESPeOPLE

Group Name	Style Mix	Combined Situational Characteristics	Combined Demographic Characteristics	Underlying Dimension
Group I - Super Sellers	High task Low self High inter- action	Salesperson: Most store sales experience Most product sales experience Customer: Customer most certain of purchase Purchase most important to customer Most likely to know salesperson	Salesperson: No significant variables Customer: More likely to be female	High selling confidence
Group II - Moderate Sellers	Moderate task Low self Moderate interaction	Salesperson: Less store sales experience Low product sales experience Customer: Customer moderately certain of purchase Purchase moderately important to customer Less likely to know salesperson	Salesperson: No significant variables Customer: More likely to be male	Moderate selling confidence
Group III - Inactive Sellers	Low task Low self Moderate interaction	Salesperson: Lowest store sales experience Lowest product sales experience Customer: Customer least certain of purchase Purchase least important to customer Less likely to know salesperson	Salesperson: No significant variables Customer: Customer typically male	Low selling confidence

Note: These tables summarize only significant results. However, it should be noted that the strength of these results is limited in that a large amount of the variation in the style-mix groups remained unexplained

Sales Results

The sales results are defined in terms of the buy/no buy decision and the amount of sales. A chi-square statistic was used to test whether the style mixes were associated with a greater or lesser number of purchases. An analysis of variance was used to test whether the amount of sales differs between the customer and salesperson style-mix groups. The mean sales values for the customers and the salespeople are shown in Tables E-5 and E-6 (see Appendix E), respectively. The analysis for the customers shows that the style-mix groups exhibit significant differences in the number of buy/no buy decisions (Table 11) as well as in the amount of their purchases (Table 12). First, in terms of the buy/no buy decision, the Group I "Interactors" and the Group II "Task Completers" made decisions to purchase more frequently than the Group III "Browsers." Secondly, in terms of the amount of sales, a Scheffe post-hoc procedure showed that the "Interactors" and the "Task Completers" had significantly higher levels of sales than the "Browsers." These two groups both had high predispositions to purchase and they both had a high task orientation. Evidently those people who exhibit an interactive or task-directed style are more prone to make a purchase than those customers who may have been primarily browsing. This suggests that the salesperson should pay attention to his customer's behavior. That is, the customer who asks questions about the merchandise and shows a heightened interest in the products or his shopping poses a greater, immediate payoff to the salesperson and/or the store. These interpretations, however, should be buffered by the fact that the R^2 value (Table 12) indicates an overall weak level of strength in the

TABLE 11

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CUSTOMER
STYLE-MIX GROUPS AND BUY/NO BUY DECISION

Customer Group		Decision	
		Buy	No Buy
Group I	Interactors	65	25
Group II	Task Completers	65	25
Group III	Browsers	25	40

$$\chi^2 = 23.421 \quad df = 2$$

Level of significance = .0000

TABLE 12

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR CUSTOMER STYLE MIXES: F-RATIO,
DEGREES OF FREEDOM, F-PROBABILITY, AND R^2
FOR THE DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Dependent Variable	F-ratio	df	F-probability	R^2
Amount of sale	7.860	2,248	.0005	.06
Product evaluation	2.006	2,248	.1367	.02
Number of interactions	3.473	2,248	.0325	.03
Time in store	.121	2,248	.8857	.001
Time in transaction	2.074	2,248	.1278	.06

results. This is probably due to the large number of in-store variables which also affect the results of the interaction.

The chi-square analysis (Table 13) and the analysis of variance (Table 14) for the salespeople show a similar pattern to that of the customers; i.e., there is a significant relationship between the salesperson style mix and the buy/no buy decision, and a significant relationship between the style mixes and the amount sold. In terms of the buy/no buy decision, the "Super Sellers" and the "Moderate Sellers" appear to make a purchase more frequently. Using the Scheffe post-hoc procedure to determine what differences existed among the three groups in mean sales value, the "Super Seller" was found to have a significantly ($\alpha=.05$) greater mean sales value than the Group II "Moderate Seller" or the Group III "Inactive Seller." Several things can be inferred from these results. First of all, it appears that the salesperson who works the hardest to communicate about his products in order to complete the sale, typically completes the sale. Secondly, it seems to indicate that customers want a salesperson who is knowledgeable as well as personable. A salesperson who is primarily task-oriented may be interpreted as pushy or manipulative. A friendly salesperson may relax the customer and his potential stereotype of "buyer beware."

Communication Results

Communication style is also assessed in terms of the communication results of number of transactions, time in the store, and time in the transaction. The number of interactions is measured as the number of times the conversation shifted from customer to salesperson or vice versa. The mean number of interactions for the customer groups is

TABLE 13

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SALESPERSON
STYLE-MIX GROUPS AND BUY/NO BUY DECISION

Salesperson Group		Decision	
		Buy	No Buy
Group I	Super Sellers	81	28
Group II	Moderate Sellers	46	38
Group III	Inactive Sellers	28	24

$$\chi^2 = 10.322 \quad df = 2$$

Level of significance = .0057

TABLE 14

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR SALESPERSON STYLE MIXES: F-RATIO,
DEGREES OF FREEDOM, F-PROBABILITY, AND R^2
FOR THE DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Dependent Variables	F-ratio	df	F-probability	R^2
Amount of sale	5.118	2,248	.0066	.04
Product evaluation	.872	2,248	.4196	.007
Number of interactions	7.783	2,248	.0005	.06
Time in store	.816	2,248	.4433	.007
Time in transaction	2,005	2,248	.1368	.02

presented in Table E-5 (see Appendix E). These means suggest that the interaction of the "Interactors" and the "Browsers" has a greater number of communications than the Group II "Task Completers." An analysis of variance of these mean number of interactions is performed for the customer groups. The results of this analysis (Table 12) show that there is a significant difference among the three customer groups in terms of the mean number of interactions. The Scheffe results show that the Group I "Interactors" and the Group III "Browsers" have significantly more interactions at the .10 level than the Group II "Task Completers." The former customer group was probably talkative about the product while the latter customer group was probably carrying on more of a social conversation or chit-chat. The extreme task customer of Group II appears to be less talkative and his conversation is probably task-centered.

The groups of salespeople are also examined in terms of the mean number of interactions. These means and standard deviations for the salespeople are listed in Table E-6 (see Appendix E). These means show that the "Super" salespeople are more talkative than the salespeople of the other two groups. An analysis of variance supports this observation (Table 14) at the .001 significance level. A Scheffe post-hoc procedure finds that these "Super" salespeople have significantly more interactions at the .05 level than the other groups of salespeople. These "Super Sellers" probably have a greater number of interactions because they are explaining the products and their attributes while also being friendly with the customers.

The duration of the interaction is examined in two aspects: time in the store and time in the transaction. Time in the store is

measured as the difference between the customer's entrance and exit from the store. The time in transaction is measured as the time in the store after the first communication has been made. These means are listed in Table E-5 (see Appendix E) for the customer groups. Overall, the Group I "Interactors" spend more time in the store and in the transaction. The analysis of variance between the customer groups, however, reveals no significant differences (Table 12, p. 139).

The mean duration results for the salesperson groups are shown in Table E-6 (see Appendix E). While the Group I "Interactor" was typically more involved in time-consuming interactions, the Group III "Browser" was also involved in long interactions. The former salesperson was probably spending the time explaining the product and making a sale while the latter salesperson may have been socializing and wasting time. The analysis of variance results for the mean duration of the interaction for the salespeople are listed in Table 14. These results do not reveal significant differences among the salespeople in terms of the duration variable. These results are understandable in that many variables probably affect time in the store and transaction, e.g., how busy the store is, if the customer is in a hurry, if the phone may ring, if a shipment comes in, and so forth.

Evaluation Results

Style importance may also be assessed in terms of the relationship between the customers' evaluations of the salesperson, product, store, and sales presentation and sales results. These evaluations are qualitative and delayed. For example, suppose a customer is shopping in the store. Due to the salesperson's communications and the customer's

general experience in the store, this customer forms evaluations about the salesperson, his presentation, the product, and the store. Even if he makes no purchase, the customer's evaluations may influence his future store trips and his informal advertising of the store and its products to his friends and family. As such, communication style is instrumental not only to immediate sales but to the evaluations which may precede future sales.

Product evaluations are examined in this study. However, it should be noted that a more thorough examination of evaluations is needed. For example, the evaluation of the salesperson, store, and sales presentation may also be fundamental to the repeat sale or future store trips. As such, in addition to the results of the product evaluations, the results of a corollary study are presented. This study simply examines the associations between the suggested set of evaluations, the value of the sale, and whether there is a commitment to shop in the store again.

With regard to product evaluations, an analysis of variance is used to compare the mean product evaluations of the style-mix groups. The mean product evaluation scores of the customer groups and their standard deviations are listed in Table E-5 (see Appendix E). The highest mean product evaluations are those of the Group I "Interactors." However, an analysis of variance reveals that there are no significant differences among the three groups at the .05 level of significance (Table 12, p. 139). These results indicate that communication style as measured in this study does not significantly affect product evaluations.

The results for the groups of salespeople are similar to those for the customer groups. An examination of the mean product evaluations reveals that the Group I "Super Seller" waited on the customers who had the highest product evaluations (Table E-6 in Appendix E). However, the analysis of variance results are not significant at the .05 level (Table 14, p. 142).

The results of the corollary study of the customer's evaluations of the salesperson, product, store, and sales presentation, are shown in Table 15. Generally, the only evaluation which is significantly correlated with the amount of sale is the overall evaluation of the store. The customer's evaluation of the salesperson, the sales presentation, and the product did not correlate significantly with sales. Additionally, the customer's evaluation of the salesperson did not show significant correlations with future store trips. However, the customer's product, sales presentation, and store evaluations all correlated significantly with future store trips. Overall, these results indicate that the customer's evaluations are associated with future store trips rather than the actual sales. This substudy maintains that if communication style is related to sales and evaluations are related to sales, then there may be an underlying association between communication style and sales. While this premise has face validity, a further study focussing on the relationships between communication style and customers' evaluations, immediate sales, return store trips, and future sales is suggested.

In summary, communication style is significant in terms of sales results and communication results; but, it is weak in explaining all the variation that is present. This could be due to the many in-store

TABLE 15

SUBSTUDY RESULTS: PEARSON CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CUSTOMER
EVALUATIONS AND FUTURE STORE TRIPS AND SALES

Customer Evaluation	Future Store Trips	Sales
Salesperson	.09	.10
Product	.48 ^a	-0.10
Store	.45 ^a	-0.30 ^b
Sales presentation	.51 ^a	-0.04

^aCorrelation significant at .001 level or beyond

^bCorrelation significant at .05 level or beyond

variables which have an effect on the customer and salesperson interaction. Tables 16 and 17 are provided as a summary of these results for the customer and salesperson, respectively. In particular, more sales as well as higher sales occur when either the customer or the salesperson has a high task orientation. Additionally, it appears as if at least a moderate interaction orientation is often necessary to consummate the sale. As noted in these tables, the interpretation of these results should be tempered by the presence of low R^2 's which indicate that while the results are significant, they do not explain all the variation present.

III. STYLE SIMILARITY AND COMPATIBILITY

The preceding analyses and results discussed the style variable in relation to customers and salespeople as independent groups. However, this final section examines the reactions of salespeople with their respective customers. It was hypothesized that certain combinations (e.g., the Group I "Interacter" with the Group I "Super Seller" and so forth) would be more effective than other combinations. As such, this section assesses the dyads of customers and salespeople in terms of sales results (i.e., the buy/no buy decision and the amount of the sale), communication results (i.e., the number of interactions and the duration of the interaction), and evaluation results of the product.

Sales Results

The sales results consist of the buy/no buy decision and the amount of sales. A chi-square analysis assesses whether the various combinations of style-mix groups are associated with a greater or lesser

TABLE 16
STYLE IMPORTANCE: SUMMARY TABLE FOR CUSTOMERS

Group Name	Style Mix	Importance
Group I - Interactors	High task Low self High inter- action	More likely to buy Higher amount of sales Higher number of interactions
Group II - Task Completers	High task Low self Moderate interaction	More likely to buy Higher amount of sales Lower number of interactions
Group III - Browsers	Low task Low self Moderate interaction	Less likely to buy Lower amount of sales Higher number of interactions

Note: While these tables summarize only significant results, the strength of these results is limited as indicated by the low R^2 's reported in the preceding tables

TABLE 17
STYLE IMPORTANCE: SUMMARY TABLE FOR SALESPeOPLE

Group Name	Style Mix	Importance
Group I - Super Seller	High task Low self High inter- action	More likely to sell Higher amount of sales Higher number of inter- actions
Group II - Moderate Seller	Moderate task Low self Moderate interaction	More likely to sell Lower amount of sales Lower number of interactions
Group III - Inactive Sellers	Low task Low self Moderate interaction	Less likely to sell Lower amount of sales Lower number of interactions

Note: While these tables summarize only significant results, the strength of these results is limited as indicated by the low R^2 's reported in the preceding tables

number of purchases than expected. As seen in Table 18, the chi-square statistic is significant at the .0001 level. As noted from this table, however, whenever dyads have similar style mixes, they also tend to have less than the necessary cell size ($n=5$). For example, the combinations where both the salesperson and the customer have high task and high interaction orientations (the "Interactors" and the "Super Sellers") and the combinations where both have low task and moderate interaction orientations (the "Browsers" and the "Inactive Sellers") are excluded from the chi-square analysis. However, a visual examination of these means gives mixed support to the premise that similar dyads are effective in terms of the number of purchases. The dyads matched by a high task orientation do appear more effective than the dyads matched by a low to moderate task orientation.

In regard to the other dyads, several of these customer-salesperson combinations are more effective in terms of the number of purchases. A visual comparison of these dyads indicates that a dyad with a high task-oriented salesperson is more effective than a dyad with a low or moderate task-oriented salesperson. The low to moderate task-oriented salesperson does not achieve a higher number of purchases even when he is dealing with a high task-oriented customer. The most compatible match appears to be the "Super Seller" (high on task and interaction) and the "Task Completer" (high on task, but moderate on interaction). This suggests that both members are focussed on the task; however, the salesperson is the dominant communicator (e.g., explaining merchandise, payment plans, and so forth).

With regard to the amount of the sale, the means for the various combinations of customers and salespeople are listed in Table E-7

TABLE 18

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MATCHED STYLE-MIX
GROUPS AND BUY/NO BUY DECISION

Customer	Salesperson	Decision	
		Buy	No Buy
Interacter (HLH)	Super Seller (HLH)*	3	1
Interacter (HLH)	Moderate Seller (MLM)	18	12
Interacter (HLH)	Inactive Seller (LLM)	7	16
Task Completer (HLM)	Super Seller (HLH)	29	5
Task Completer (HLM)	Moderate Seller (MLM)	60	21
Task Completer (HLM)	Inactive Seller (LLM)	17	17
Browser (LLM)	Super Seller (HLH)*	5	1
Browser (LLM)	Moderate Seller (MLM)	14	5
Browser (LLM)	Inactive Seller (LLM)*	2	11

$$\chi^2 = 25.662 \quad df = 5$$

Level of significance = .0001

*This combination was excluded from the chi-square analysis due to a cell size of less than five

Note: The categorization of H(High), M(Moderate), and L(Low) indicates the relative style scale value for the task, self, and interaction orientations, respectively, of the style-mix groups

(see Appendix E). A visual comparison of these means show that the combinations including a high task and a high interaction salesperson are in the highest mean sales level. The next highest mean sales values are found for the combinations which include a high task-oriented salesperson. The lowest mean sales values are found in matches which include the overall moderate salesperson.

The results of the analyses of variance of the amount of the sale among the combinations of style mixes are presented in Table 19. Although these results were not strong as indicated by the low R^2 's, significant differences are found among the groups. The Scheffe post-hoc procedure finds the Group II "Task Completer" and Group I "Super Seller" combination to have significantly greater sales than any combination which includes a Group III "Inactive Seller," regardless of the customer involved. This indicates that the salesperson should know the product and work hard at helping the customer and be friendly and cooperative with the customer. The mean sales value is highest if the salesperson is both task and interaction-oriented. However, significantly fewer sales occur if the salesperson does not exhibit at least a moderate amount of task orientation.

The salesperson appears to be the primary force in the sale, regardless of the customer involved. If he has a high task orientation and a high interaction orientation, then the customer is very responsive. If he has a moderate task and moderate interaction orientation, then the customer is responsive, but to a lesser degree. And, if he exhibits neither a moderate task orientation nor a high interaction orientation, then the customer is significantly less responsive.

TABLE 19

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR MATCHED STYLE MIXES: F-RATIO,
DEGREES OF FREEDOM, F-PROBABILITY, AND R^2 FOR
THE DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Dependent Variable	F-ratio	df	F-probability	R^2
Amount of sale	5.295	7,239	.0000	.13
Product evaluation	.221	7,239	.9801	.01
Number of interactions	3.925	7,239	.0004	.10
Time in store	.917	7,239	.4936	.03
Time in transaction	.705	7,239	.6675	.02

Communication Results

The combination dyads are also examined via their communication results, namely, the number of interactions and their duration. The mean number of interactions for the matched dyads is listed in Table E-7 (see Appendix E). A visual comparison of these means shows that two dyads have a greater number of interactions: the dyad with a "Task Completer" customer and an "Inactive" salesperson and the dyad with a "Task Completer" and a "Super Seller." The first dyad appears to have a more communicative customer, while the second dyad has a more communicative salesperson.

The analysis of variance results also finds a significant difference among the group combinations in terms of the number of interactions (Table 19). A Scheffe post-hoc procedure finds that the dyad composed of a Group II "Task Completer" and a Group III "Inactive Seller" has significantly more interactions than the dyad composed of a Group I "Interacter" and a Group II "Moderate Seller." Possibly, the "Task Completer" who really wants to complete his shopping keeps trying, but the "Inactive Seller" is just not able to satisfactorily "close the sale." However, it should be noted that both of these dyads have relatively low sales. This finding supports the premise that a high level of interactions is not necessary for a high level of sales. In other words, there is a qualitative as well as a quantitative dimension to communication. However, it should be noted that the R^2 values (Table 19) are low. As such, the above interpretation is possible but not absolute.

With regard to duration, an examination of the mean time in the store and the transaction (Table E-7 in Appendix E) indicates that the

dyad composed of the Group I "Interactive" customer and the Group I "Super Seller" salesperson spends the least amount of time in the transaction and in the store. The greatest amount of time spent in the store and in the transaction tends to occur when either the customer or the salesperson is low or moderate in his task orientation and interaction orientation (i.e., a Group III "Browser" or "Inactive Seller"). In light of the sales results discussed earlier for each of the style-mix groups, these results suggest that greater amounts of time do not necessarily contribute to greater sales. However, the analysis of variance results for time in the store and time in the transaction finds no significant statistical differences among the dyads (Table 19).

Evaluation Results

The combinations of style mixes are also examined for differences in their mean product evaluations. These product evaluation means are listed in Table E-7 (see Appendix E). As noted from this table, the combination groups with a high task-oriented and high interaction-oriented salesperson and a high task-oriented customer have the most favorable product evaluations. As with the other results, the effectiveness of the dyad appears to be contingent on having a high task-oriented individual in the dyad. However, the analysis of variance finds no significant differences among the matched groups (Table 19).

In summary, some of the dyads appear to be very compatible, given their sales and communication results. Table 20 is provided as a summary of these results. As noted in this table, the most effective dyads include a customer and/or a salesperson who exhibits a high task orientation. In general, it appears that it is important for the

TABLE 20

STYLE COMPATIBILITY: SUMMARY TABLE

Matched Groups		n	Compatibility*
Customer	Salesperson		
Interactor (HLH)	Super Seller (HLH)	4	More likely to buy
Interactor (HLH)	Moderate Seller (MLM)	30	Less likely to buy
Interactor (HLH)	Inactive Seller (LLM)	23	Less likely to buy Significantly lower amount of sale
Task Completer (HLM)	Super Seller (HLH)	34	More likely to buy Significantly greater amount of sales Significantly greater number of interactions
Task Completer (HLM)	Moderate Seller (MLM)	83	Less likely to buy
Task Completer (HLM)	Inactive Seller (LLM)	38	Less likely to buy Significantly lower amount of sales Significantly greater number of interactions
Browser (LLM)	Super Seller (HLH)	6	More likely to buy
Browser (LLM)	Moderate Seller (MLM)	19	Less likely to buy
Browser (LLM)	Inactive Seller (LLM)	14	Less likely to buy Significantly lower amount of sales

n = number of matched groups in each category

*Due to inadequate cell sizes, style similarity could not be statistically examined. As such only the style compatibility results are listed in the table

Note: The categorization of H(High), M(Moderate), and L(Low) indicates the relative style scale value for the task, self, and interaction orientations, respectively, of the style-mix groups

Note: While these tables summarize only significant results, the strength of these results is limited as indicated by the low R^2 's reported in the preceding tables

salesperson to be very task-oriented. However, to complete the task, he must also be able to communicate effectively.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the purpose, methodology, and results of the field study. In addition, it also discusses the implications of this study for future research and marketing management.

I. SUMMARY

Communication style is an individual's tendency to communicate via unique patterns or combinations of code, content, and communication rules. As an individual uses these three elements to communicate, he begins to develop patterns or a unique style to his communication. In a sense, his communication style is an artistic expression of his learned language and the various modes of communicating.

With regard to marketing, Sheth (1976) suggested that the communication style of the customer and the salesperson may be task-oriented, self-oriented, or interaction-oriented (based on earlier work of Bass, 1960, 1967). However, this has never been tested or fully conceptualized. As such, the purpose of this research was to further conceptualize and operationalize the concept of communication style. In accordance, three major research questions were asked. First of all, do customers and salespeople exhibit certain styles of communication and can they be reliably measured; and, are there any demographic or situational variables which are related to style use? Secondly, this research posed the question of whether or not communication style was

important in terms of sales, communications, and evaluations of the product, salesperson, sales presentation, and the store. Finally, this study examined the question of whether compatible style mixes existed among the customer-salesperson dyads; and, if certain combinations were more effective in terms of the sales results, communication results, and evaluation results. Consequently, the study had a tripartite focus: style measurement, style importance, and style compatibility.

These three research areas were examined via a field study of thirteen sporting goods stores wherein customers, salespeople, and interviewers completed questionnaires composed of the style scale items and the demographic and situational items. The question of style measurement was examined and discussed through scale reliability procedures, various univariate analyses, cluster analysis, and multiple discriminant analyses. The results of these analyses isolated three style-mix groups of customers and three style-mix groups of salespeople. The style importance and style compatibility questions were analyzed with chi-square analyses and analyses of variance. These results found significant differences among the style-mix groups of customers and of salespeople in terms of the sales results, communication results, and evaluation results. It should be noted, however, that the strength of some of these results, even though statistically significant, are limited. In some cases the amount of variation which is explained via the significant relationships is low. Therefore, the interpretation of these results should be taken as suggestive rather than definitive. These results are summarized below.

Table 21 provides a summary of the customer style-mix groups which were uncovered in the cluster and multiple discriminant analyses. In essence, three groups of customers were isolated which exhibited different communication style mixes. The Group I "Interacter" was typified by a high task orientation, a low self orientation, and a high interaction orientation. This customer knew what he wanted and vocalized his needs and wants accordingly. In essence, the Group I "Interacter" was a confident buyer, and a highly vocal buyer who was very interested in completing the task. At the same time, he was amiable to the salesperson. Additionally, he tended to be helped by a salesperson whose characteristics and experiences supported this customer's shopping confidence and tendency to be personable. This customer was important to the store because he tended to make a greater number of purchases and the highest dollar amount of purchase.

The Group II "Task Completer" exhibited a high task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation. Compared to the other two groups of customers, the "Task Completer" was less communicative and focussed primarily on the task. The combined characteristics of the customer and the salesperson seem to have contributed to this customer's shopping confidence but to have detracted somewhat from his friendliness and congeniality. For example, his salesperson typically had the highest level of retail sales experience, and yet was in a poor mood. Generally, the Group II customer appeared to be a confident but nonvocal buyer who was not very personable. Though less personable than the "Interacter," the "Task Completer" was also more likely to make a purchase, and to make a higher-dollar purchase.

TABLE 21
OVERALL SUMMARY FOR CUSTOMERS

Group Name	Style Mix	Underlying Dimensions	Importance	Compatibility	Combined Situational Characteristics	Combined Demographic Characteristics
Group I - Inter- actants	High task Low self High inter- action	High shopping confidence High personal involvement	More likely to buy Higher amount of sales Higher number of inter- actions	More likely to buy from Super Sellers Less likely to buy from Moderate and Inactive Sellers Significantly lower amount of sales with Inactive Sellers	Customer: Most predisposed to purchase Most likely to know the salesperson Salesperson: Moderate retail sales experience Greater use of salary plan Salesperson more likely to be parttime Product more likely to be in stock Customer more likely to approach salesperson	Customer: More likely to be female Typically married Salesperson: Younger salesperson Least likely to be single Salesperson in good mood
Group II - Task Completers	High task Low self Moderate inter- action	High shopping confidence Low personal involvement	More likely to buy Higher amount of sales Lower number of inter- actions	More likely to buy from Super Sellers Less likely to buy from Moderate and Inactive Sellers Significantly greater amount of sales with Super Sellers Significantly lower amount of sales with Inactive Sellers Significantly greater number of interactions with Super and Inactive Sellers	Customer: Moderately predisposed to purchase Least likely to know salesperson Salesperson: Most retail sales experience Greater use of salary plan Salesperson more likely to be full-time Product more likely to be in stock Customer more likely to approach salesperson	Customer: More likely to be male Typically single Salesperson: Younger salesperson Salesperson most likely to be single Salesperson in poor mood
Group III - Drivers	Low task Low self Moderate inter- action	Low shopping confidence Moderate personal involvement	Less likely to buy Lower amount of sales Higher number of inter- actions	More likely to buy from Super Sellers Less likely to buy from Moderate and Inactive Sellers Significantly lower amount of sales from Inactive Sellers	Customer: Least predisposed to purchase Moderate likelihood of knowing salesperson Salesperson: Least retail sales experience Greater use of combination plan Salesperson more likely to be parttime Product more likely to be out of stock Customer usually approached by salesperson	Customer: Most likely to be male Typically single Salesperson: Older salesperson Salesperson likely to be single Salesperson in poor mood

Note: While these tables summarize only significant results, the strength of these results in some cases was limited as indicated by the amount of variation (low R^2 's) which remained unexplained

The Group III "Browser" was typified by a low task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation. This customer appeared to be more of a shopper than a buyer. He did not demonstrate much certainty in his shopping task, but yet he was very friendly and personable with the sales clerk. He seemed to have been more interested in socializing with the salesperson (e.g., exchanging fishing stories, exchanging information on the upcoming race or tournament, and so forth) than in completing his shopping. As such, although the "Browser" exhibited a high number of interactions, he was not likely to make a purchase; and, if he did make a purchase, it tended to be a low-dollar purchase.

A summary of the salespeople is presented in Table 22. As noted in this table, three groups of salespeople were isolated on the basis of their communication style mix. The first group of salespeople (Group I "Super Sellers") were characterized by a high task orientation, a low self orientation, and a high interaction orientation. These salespeople tended to have the most experience in store sales and in sporting goods. Additionally, their customers tended to be the most certain of what they wanted. As such, this salesperson's own characteristics and those of his customer tended to make the "Super Seller" a more confident seller. The confidence of these salespeople was exhibited in their dealings with their customers. They were highly interactive, explaining merchandise, and being friendly. In terms of success, these salespeople were very likely to make a sale, and the sale was likely to be of a high-dollar value. As such, these salespeople could be characterized as

TABLE 22
OVERALL SUMMARY FOR SALESPeOPLE

Group Name	Style Mix	Underlying Dimensions	Importance	Compatibility	Combined Situational Characteristics	Combined Demographic Characteristics
Group I - Super Sellers	High task Low self High inter- action	High selling confidence	More likely to sell Higher amount of sales Higher number of inter- actions	More likely to sell to all three customer groups Significantly greater amount of sales with Task Completers Significantly more inter- actions with Task Completers	Salesperson: Most store sales experience Most product sales experience Customer: Most certain of purchase Purchase most important to customer Most likely to know salesperson	Salesperson: No significant variables Customer: More likely to be female
Group II - Moderate Sellers	Moderate task Low self Moderate inter- action	Moderate selling confi- dence	More likely to sell Lower amount of sales Lower number of inter- actions	Less likely to sell to all three customer groups	Salesperson: Less store sales experience Low product sales experience Customer: Customer moderately certain of purchase Purchase moderately important Less likely to know salesperson	Salesperson: No significant variables Customer: More likely to be male
Group III - Inactive Sellers	Low task Low self Moderate inter- action	Low selling confi- dence	Less likely to sell Lower amount of sales Lower number of inter- actions	Less likely to sell to all three customer groups Significantly lower amount of sales with all three customer groups Significantly more inter- actions with Task Completers	Salesperson: Lowest store sales experience Lowest product sales experience Customer: Least certain of purchase Purchase least important to customer Less likely to know sales- person	Salesperson: No significant variables Customer: Customer typically male

Note: While these tables summarize only significant results, the strength of these results in some cases was limited as indicated by the amount of variation (low R^2 's) which remained unexplained

vocal, high-dollar sellers who were confident of and successful in their selling roles.

The Group II "Moderate Seller" exhibited a moderate task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation. This salesperson differed from the "Super Seller" in terms of degree. While he was interactive, he was not as interactive as the "Super Seller." While he did try to complete the sale, he did not seem to be as persistent nor as proficient in doing so. These salespeople tended to exhibit a much lower level of sales experience in their respective stores than did the "Super Sellers." Additionally, their customers seemed to exhibit only a moderate degree of certainty with regard to their shopping tasks. As such, both of these factors may have contributed to the "Moderate Seller's" lower level of selling confidence.

The Group III "Inactive Seller" was typified by a low task orientation, a low self orientation, and a moderate interaction orientation. This salesperson could be characterized as a non-seller. He did not seem to be confident of his selling role, nor very comfortable in dealing with the customer. Not surprisingly, this salesperson had a low level of sales experience with the product and a low level of experience in the store. Both of these factors may have contributed to his low level of task orientation and to his moderate level of interaction. Additionally, this salesperson's customer, who was the least predisposed to purchase and in the worst mood may have contributed to this salesperson's being less friendly and less persistent in "making the sale." In any event, this salesperson was not likely to make a sale. If he did make a sale, the

amount was usually low. Generally, this person appeared to be a relatively ineffective salesperson.

In general, customers and salespeople can be characterized by their use of communication style. Overall, the use of a style mix by either the salesperson or the customer appears to be contingent upon both their demographic and their shared situational characteristics.

The various customer-salesperson style-mix combinations were examined to see whether any one type of dyad (e.g., "Task Completer" and "Moderate Seller" or "Interacter" and "Browser" and so forth) was more compatible or effective than another. This examination of the style mixes in each of the dyads found that some style combinations were very compatible in terms of the interaction results. For example, any combination which includes a high task-oriented salesperson was typically more effective in terms of sales. If the style mix was both high task and high interaction-oriented, then the results were even better. The "Super Seller" and "Task Completer" dyad was the best combination in terms of sales results. On the contrary, a match with a Group II "Inactive Seller" was typically unsuccessful in terms of sales.

Overall, the results of the interaction were contingent upon the mutual interplay between the customer's style mix and salesperson's style mix. However, these results suggest that the salesperson may be the dominant force in determining the success of the sales interaction.

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this study can be used as a basis for future research. First of all, several problems encountered in conducting

this study point to areas in need of improvement in future studies of this type. Secondly, the results of this study suggest several directions for future research efforts.

One problem encountered in conducting this study was that of conceptualizing and operationalizing the style variable. This study used the qualitative dimensions of a task, self, and/or interaction orientation to characterize an individual's communication style. While this was a plausible framework to use, the results suggested that the self orientation was either not prevalent in this retail sales setting or that the scale items which were used to measure this orientation were not adequate. The task and interaction scales seemed to be more appropriate to this setting. Some of the customers and the salespeople indicated that they found it difficult to make judgments about the other person with regard to the self scale items. Also, the customers who were in a hurry often refused to answer the questionnaire. Since these people probably had more of a task orientation, it may have affected the results. Given these results, it may have been more appropriate not to use the self dimensions or to use a self-reported measure or standardized test measure instead of a measure reported by the other person. While this study examined Sheth's suggested framework for style orientation (i.e., task, self, and interaction), there may be other more useful dimensions. For example, a set of dimensions could be isolated which reflect the functions of the communications (i.e., informing, persuading, entertaining, surviving, socializing, or whatever). These dimensions may more accurately reflect the interaction which occurs.

Also, the nature of the in-store setting presented some problems. For example, while four out of five customers did complete the questionnaire, many commented that it was too long and often redundant due primarily to the scale items. In addition, while the customers were generally very cooperative, at certain hours of the day or on rainy days, the interviewers had to wait an hour or so for a customer to come into the store. As such, the sampling of the customers was a very tedious and time-consuming task. However, it was felt that the sampling needs to take place as close as possible to the interaction so that the customer and the salesperson can remember each other and can make the needed evaluations. An alternative would have been to examine communication style via a laboratory experiment with more control but less of a "real" environment. While it has shortcomings, the in-store interviews were felt to be most appropriate for the exploratory study. It may be beneficial to further operationalize communication style in a lab experiment and then to utilize these results in future field studies in the retail store setting.

Another problem was that of isolating the style variable amidst all of the in-store and out-of-store variables. While various results were found to be significant, they did not explain a large amount of all the variation which was present. Evidently, there are a number of in-store variables such as store layout, product availability, location, displays, price, sale items, and so on, which also affect the outcome of the interaction.

Given the results of this study and given the problems discussed above, there are several promising directions for future research efforts.

While this study provided a precursory view of the relationships between communication style and the various results of the interaction, i.e., sales, communications, and evaluations, it would be of primary interest to further examine these relationships. First of all and most importantly, the measurement of the style variable should be addressed. Because the self scale was less reliable, it could be dropped and/or redone to more accurately reflect the store setting. In addition, the task and interaction scales could be strengthened. On the other hand, it may be advantageous to not use Bass' categorization but to use a content analysis on the in-store interactions to develop a more appropriate framework.

Another major thrust in studying the communication style variable may be to design a study which traces the customer's store behavior over a period of time with regard to the style variable. For example, in this study, various evaluations were related to future store trips rather than to current sales. As such, a longitudinal study of the relationships among communication style, evaluations, current and future sales, and return store trips may prove beneficial.

In addition, a promising area for research may be to integrate the style variable into the work on influence strategies, the use of power, and role requirements. For example, an individual who uses the influence strategy of "impression management" may exhibit a certain communication style and/or may be more able to switch communication styles at will. Also, certain types of interpersonal power may be conveyed through certain communication styles and not others. Or, more importantly, the use of certain communication styles may give a more powerful impression. As such, it would be interesting to design a study which traces customer's store behavior over a period of time.

Regarding the overall customer-salesperson interaction process, there are several suggested areas for further research. First of all, a typology of the environmental variables which affect the interaction process is needed. For example, there are many situational variables which relate to the customer's and salesperson's experiences, but there are also many other factors which relate to the store itself such as displays, traffic patterns, sale racks, and so forth. A measure of the strength and effect of all these variables could be useful. As such, communication style should be investigated in a research design which includes the rest of the in-store variables as well. It would be interesting to see what tradeoffs are made in the store with regard to communication style and the other variables. Secondly, little is known about the effects of information processing on the interaction. The research available on general information processing should be extended into the sales area. For example, it would be interesting to explore whether or not having the role of customer and/or salesperson causes the individual to process information in ways which are unique to the role and not the individual per se. Thirdly, the sales and consumer behavior areas should integrate their respective findings and progress toward a synthesized understanding of what occurs before, during, and after the customer is in the store. A suggested link between these two areas is the communication process involved in selling and the resultant information processing which occurs. Both areas can gain from a mutual understanding of each other's expertise. Finally, the customer-salesperson interaction process should be integrated into the sales force models. These models provide insight into the quantitative

aspects of selling (e.g., allocating territories, workload, and so forth). However, an understanding of the customer-salesperson interaction process could strengthen the qualitative dimension in these models.

III. MARKETING MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

At this point in the development of the conceptualization and operationalization of the communication style variable, it would be very difficult to make concrete suggestions to marketing managers. However, in light of the recognition that the implications of the communication style variable are conjectural at this point, it would be interesting to discuss some of the areas that may in the future affect or be useful to marketing managers.

Marketing managers may be able to benefit from two aspects of the study. First of all, they may be able to draw from the conceptual foundation of the study. Secondly, in the future when more research has been done in the area, they may be able to benefit from the actual results of this field study and future studies.

The conceptual foundation of the study and the proposed model of the customer-salesperson interaction process recognizes that the interaction between the customer and the salesperson is complex as well as dynamic. While the details of this process are not absolutely understood, the phenomenon of communication style was found to be a basic part of the interaction process. In specific, communication is a tool along with various in-store and out-of-store variables which can create, maintain, and destroy the exchange process between the customer and the salesperson.

In addition, the model recognizes the importance of the customer in the interaction process. The customer is not passive, but rather dynamic and involved as well. The salesperson's communications are reflective of his experiences with the customer while the customer's communications are reflective of his experiences with the salesperson.

With regard to the study results, the implications for marketing managers are conjectural at this point but will hopefully become more concrete as additional research is done in the area. Various communication style mixes were isolated in the customers and the salespeople. In turn, these style mixes were found to be important in terms of the results of the interaction, and specifically, sales. While the results did show that communication style was important, it was also acknowledged that communication style is just one of the many in-store variables which may affect the interaction. As such, while the results were significant, the strength of the results were weak in explaining all the variation present.

The task-oriented salesperson was found to have higher levels of sales as compared to a more moderate salesperson. This could have implications for managers in terms of selection, training, and motivation. First of all, the preferred salesperson appears to be extremely task-oriented; however, he also appears to be interactive in dealing with people. In effect, he appears to need the communication skills which enable him to carry out these two aspects of the interaction.

In accordance, the marketing manager may be able to plan his selecting, training, and motivating efforts to attract and develop this preferred salesperson. For example, the salesperson who is hired on the basis of his interpersonal skills may not be the best choice.

The results of the study suggest that the task orientation may be just as important and probably more important than the interactive orientation. If further research confirms this finding, then the marketing manager may want to seek out the more experienced salesperson. The manager may also consider training his salespeople to be more diligent in assisting the customers and trying to "close the sale." He may also train his salespeople to be more aware of their degree of interactiveness with the customer. In addition, given that future research supports the findings of this study, the manager may want to include a consideration of style in his evaluation process of the salesperson. In any event, the marketing manager may want to develop salespeople who are extremely task-oriented but also friendly and helpful.

Differences in customers' styles also seem to contribute to the effectiveness of the sales interaction. The highly task-oriented customer who knows what he wants and communicates that information is, as one would expect, the most likely to make a purchase. In general, this customer may be recognized by his insistence on looking at products, finding out their features, and so forth. He may also give the impression of being in a hurry. Possibly, the salesperson should be taught to capitalize on the purchase certainty of this type of customer.

The marketing manager should also be aware that communication style may be related to future sales and informal communications about the store. This study does not thoroughly examine this relationship; however, this relationship seems, at least intuitively, to be an important consideration for the marketing manager.

As such, communication style may be an important concept and phenomenon for the marketing manager to understand. It not only seems to directly affect current sales, but may also indirectly affect future sales through the evaluations of the salesperson, product, store, and sales presentation. In either case, communication style seems a likely candidate for the marketing manager's consideration and action. As the communication style variable is further researched, the marketing manager may benefit from these findings. However, at this point, the results of the study provide only a conjectural basis with which to discuss marketing management implications.

In conclusion, this work has suggested further research efforts in a number of areas. In particular, the communication style variable is in a neophyte stage in marketing and, consequently, provides ample opportunity for further research. In addition, the customer-salesperson interaction process is fundamental to all businesses and, as such, should continue to be of relevant and primary concern for managers as well as researchers.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SELF-ORIENTED, TASK-ORIENTED, AND INTERACTION-ORIENTED STYLES

APPENDIX A

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SELF-ORIENTED, TASK-ORIENTED, AND INTERACTION-ORIENTED STYLES

Characteristics of Self-Oriented Style

1. Likes direct personal reward, recognition, and respect

. . . attracted to the group (in the expectation of) direct rewards for themselves, regardless of the interaction and task effectiveness of the group (1960, pp. 149-150)

. . . (the group) is the cast as well as the audience (for gaining) in status or esteem (1960, pp. 149-150)

. . . (likes) to be known as a successful person (1977 ORI item)

. . . (prefers) to be recognized for efforts (1967, p. 262)

. . . would like to be admired by others (1977 ORI item)

. . . (likes) personal praise (1977 ORI item)

. . . (likes) being appreciated by others (1977 ORI item)

. . . more interested in extrinsic reward than intrinsic satisfaction or work (1960, pp. 149-150)

. . . I do my best when my efforts are rewarded (1977 ORI item)

. . . (expects) direct rewards to himself regardless of the job he is doing or the effects of what he does upon others working for him (1977 ORI item)

. . . (prefers) to be a respected leader (1967, p. 262)

. . . (enjoys) being praised for some achievement (1977 ORI item)

. . . makes himself respected by his followers (1977 ORI item)

2. Uses group participation as a vehicle to satisfy own needs

. . . the group is merely the theater in which certain generalized needs can be satisfied (1960, p. 149)

. . . (prefers) to have loyal friends (1967, p. 262)

. . . the group is the cast as well as the audience for which the self-oriented member can air his personal difficulties (1960, pp. 149-150)

. . . (prefers) to take it easy (and let others do the work) (1967, p. 262)

3. Is concerned with himself

. . . more concerned about his own needs than those of others (1960, pp. 149-150)

. . . more likely to be unresponsive to the needs of others around him (1977, p. 3)

. . . concerned mainly with himself not co-worker's needs or the job to be done (1977, p. 3)

. . . personal concerns may be the focus (1967, p. 260)

. . . more likely to be introspective (1977, p. 3)

4. Is aggressive and dominating

. . . other members are both the remainder of the cast as well as an audience for which the self-oriented member can agress (1960, pp. 149-150)

. . . other members are both the remainder of the cast as well as an audience for which the self-oriented member can dominate (1960, pp. 149-150)

. . . euphoric feelings engendered by the submission of others (1967, p. 260)

. . . domineering behavior (1967, p. 260)

. . . self-concern to dominate is what primarily motivates his attraction to group and to remaining in it (1967, p. 260)

. . . more likely to be dominating (1967, p. 3)

Characteristics of Task-Oriented Style

1. Interested in task completion

. . . most satisfaction if and when the group attains task success (1960, p. 148)

. . . most attracted to a group by expectations of task success and its rewards (1963, p. 101)

. . . (group) offers him the opportunity for the successful completion of a challenging task (1967, p. 260)

. . . gets the job done (1977 ORI item)

. . . prefers to be a leader who gets things done (1967, p. 262)

. . . (person concerned with) completing a job (1966, p. 3)

. . . (person concerned with) solving problems (1977, p. 3)

. . . (enjoys) the feeling of accomplishment (1977 ORI item)

. . . helps others complete a mutual task (1977 ORI item)

. . . concentrates on the group's task as the means to his reward (1967, p. 260)

. . . task may be the focus of attention (1967, p. 260)

. . . I do my best job when my job is on the line (1977 ORI item)

2. Concerned with effective and outstanding performance

. . . acts must usually be effective and not merely successful to satisfy the task-oriented leader (1960, p. 149)

. . . (prefers to have) the feeling of a job well done (1977 ORI item)

. . . (person concerned with) doing the best job possible (1977, p. 3)

. . . reinforced primarily by task effectiveness (1963, p. 101)

. . . tends to work harder within the group to make it as productive as possible (1977, p. 3)

. . . prefers to be wise (1967, p. 262)

. . . (prefers) to be known as an efficient person (1977 ORI item)

. . . (likes) being satisfied with his performance (1977 ORI item)

3. Persistent and hardworking

. . . will try hardest to help obtain the group's goals (1960, pp. 149-150)

- . . . working with persistence on the barriers preventing the group from obtaining success in its endeavors (1963, p. 101)
- . . . will try hardest to solve group's problem (1960, pp. 149-150)
- . . . will try hardest to overcome barriers preventing the successful completion of the group's tasks (1960, pp. 149-150)
- . . . persists at assignments (1960, pp. 149-150)
- . . . if he is interested in what the group is doing, he will fight hard for what he regards as right (1977, p. 3)

Characteristics of Interaction-Oriented Style

1. Seeks and enjoys interaction

- . . . (reap) the rewards from the satisfaction of the interaction with others (1963, p. 101)
- . . . focus of attention on group (1967, p. 260)
- . . . dislikes social isolation and enjoys the company of others (1967, p. 260)
- . . . need to interact with others (1967, p. 260)
- . . . (prefers) to work cooperatively (1967, p. 262)
- . . . (do best with) people who are congenial (1977 ORI item)
- . . . like cooperative effort (1977 ORI item)

2. Is concerned with executing and maintaining personal relationships

- . . . maintaining harmonious, conflict-free relationships with others is most satisfying (1963, p. 101)
- . . . (prefers) to make more friends (1967, p. 262)
- . . . concerned with the group as a means for forming friendships (1960, pp. 149-150)
- . . . concerned with group as helping foster strong interpersonal relationships (1960, pp. 149-150)
- . . . concerned with maintaining happy harmonious relationships in a superficial sort of way (1977, p. 3)

- . . . (prefers) to have fun with friends (1967, p. 262)
- . . . (prefers) to have helpful friends (1967, p. 262)
- . . . concerned with group as providing the security of belonging (1960, pp. 149-150)
- . . . concerned with group as means for sharing things with others (1960, pp. 149-150)
- . . . (prefers) to be known as a friendly person (1977 ORI item)
- . . . (likes) being with friends (1977 ORI item)

APPENDIX B

STYLE SCALE DIMENSIONS AND ITEMS FOR THE
SALESPERSON AND CUSTOMER

APPENDIX B

STYLE SCALE DIMENSIONS AND ITEMS FOR THE SALESPERSON

Self-Oriented

- A) Direct personal reward, recognition, and respect
 - 1. This salesperson really wants to be admired by others.
 - 2. This salesperson tried to impress me with himself.
 - 3. This salesperson really wants to be appreciated by others.
- B) Group participation as a vehicle to satisfy own needs
 - 1. This salesperson talked about his own personal difficulties.
- C) Concerned with himself
 - 1. This salesperson seemed more interested in himself than in me.
 - 2. This salesperson was more interested in what he had to say than in what I had to say.
- D) Aggressive and dominating
 - 1. This salesperson was forceful.
 - 2. This salesperson tried to dominate the conversation.

Task-Oriented

- A) Interested in task completion
 - 1. This salesperson's main concern was to sell the merchandise.
 - 2. This salesperson's primary concern was to help me make a purchase.
 - 3. This salesperson wanted to complete the sale.
- B) Concerned with effective and outstanding performance
 - 1. This salesperson wanted to do the sales job well.
 - 2. This salesperson was concerned with doing the best job possible.
- C) Persistent and hardworking
 - 1. This salesperson worked hard to complete the sale.
 - 2. This salesperson was very persistent.

Interaction-Oriented

A) Seeks and enjoys interaction

1. This salesperson genuinely enjoyed helping me.
2. This salesperson was interested in socializing.
3. This salesperson was a cooperative person.
4. This salesperson likes to help customers.
5. This salesperson was easy to talk with.

B) Concerned with executing and maintaining personal relationships

1. This salesperson tried to establish a personal relationship.
2. This salesperson seemed interested in me not only as a customer, but also as a person.
3. This salesperson was friendly.

STYLE SCALE DIMENSIONS AND ITEMS FOR THE CUSTOMER

Self-Oriented

- A) Direct personal reward, recognition, and respect
 - 1. This customer really wants to be admired by others.
 - 2. This customer tried to impress me with himself.
 - 3. This customer really wants to be appreciated by others.
- B) Group participation as a vehicle to satisfy own needs
 - 1. This customer talked about his own personal difficulties.
- C) Concerned with himself
 - 1. This customer seemed more interested in himself than in the product or what I had to say.
 - 2. This customer was primarily interested in what he had to say and not in what I had to say.
- D) Aggressive and dominating
 - 1. This customer was forceful.
 - 2. This customer tried to dominate the conversation.

Task-Oriented

- A) Interested in task completion
 - 1. This customer's main concern was to finish his shopping.
 - 2. This customer's primary concern was to make a purchase.
 - 3. This customer wanted to finish the shopping task.
- B) Concerned with effective and outstanding performance
 - 1. This customer wanted to complete his shopping as effectively as possible.
 - 2. This customer was concerned with getting the best deal possible.
- C) Persistent and hardworking
 - 1. This customer tried hard to complete his shopping task.
 - 2. This customer was very persistent.

Interaction-Oriented

A) Seeks and enjoys interaction

1. This customer genuinely enjoyed my helping him.
2. This customer was interested in socializing.
3. This customer was a cooperative person.
4. This customer likes to talk to people.
5. This customer was easy to talk with.

B) Concerned with executing and maintaining personal relationships

1. This customer tried to establish a personal relationship.
2. This customer seemed interested in me not only as a salesperson, but also as a person.
3. This customer was friendly.

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRES

APPENDIX C

SALESPERSON QUESTIONNAIRE

CUSTOMER: Listed below are a number of statements relating to the customer you have just been talking with. Please read these statements. Comparing this customer to others you have dealt with, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with these statements by circling the appropriate number.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNCERTAIN	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. This customer wanted to complete his shopping as effectively as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
2. This customer tried to establish a personal relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
3. This customer wanted to finish the shopping task.	1	2	3	4	5
4. This customer was concerned with getting the best deal possible.	1	2	3	4	5
5. This customer was <u>not</u> very persistent.	1	2	3	4	5
6. This customer talked about his own personal difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
7. This customer was forceful.	1	2	3	4	5
8. This customer seemed interested in me not only as a salesperson, but also as a person.	1	2	3	4	5
9. This customer tried hard to complete the shopping task.	1	2	3	4	5
10. This customer genuinely enjoyed my helping him.	1	2	3	4	5
11. This customer likes to talk to people.	1	2	3	4	5
12. This customer did <u>not</u> try to impress me with himself.	1	2	3	4	5
13. This customer was primarily interested in what he had to say and not in what I had to say.	1	2	3	4	5
14. This customer was <u>not</u> a cooperative person.	1	2	3	4	5
15. This customer was <u>not</u> concerned with getting the best deal possible.	1	2	3	4	5
16. This customer was very persistent.	1	2	3	4	5
17. This customer's main concern was to finish his shopping.	1	2	3	4	5
18. This customer tried to dominate the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5
19. This customer's primary concern was to make a purchase.	1	2	3	4	5
20. This customer really wants to be appreciated by others.	1	2	3	4	5
21. This customer was easy to talk with.	1	2	3	4	5
22. This customer was more interested in himself than in the product or what I had to say.	1	2	3	4	5
23. This customer was <u>not</u> forceful.	1	2	3	4	5
24. This customer was friendly.	1	2	3	4	5
25. This customer tried to impress me with himself.	1	2	3	4	5
26. This customer really wants to be admired by others.	1	2	3	4	5
27. This customer was a cooperative person.	1	2	3	4	5
28. This customer was interested in socializing.	1	2	3	4	5

SALES PRESENTATION: Please evaluate your own sales presentation by completing the following items. Circle the appropriate number to indicate strongly agree, agree, etc.

- | | <u>SA</u> | <u>A</u> | <u>U</u> | <u>D</u> | <u>SD</u> |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. My sales presentation to this customer was very effective. | | | | | |
| 2. I was well-prepared for my sales presentation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I thought my sales presentation was easy to understand. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. My sales presentation was too long. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. My overall impression of my own sales presentation was favorable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

DEMOGRAPHICS: This information is requested for classification purposes only. It will make the results of the survey more meaningful.

1. The product the customer was looking for was: _____out-of-stock _____in stock
2. The amount of this sale was:
 - _____ No sale was made.
 - _____ less than \$10.00.
 - _____ \$10.00 to \$29.99.
 - _____ \$30.00 to \$49.99.
 - _____ Over \$50.00.
3. While helping this customer, my overall mood was:
 - _____ Much worse than usual.
 - _____ Worse than usual.
 - _____ As it usually is.
 - _____ Better than usual.
 - _____ Much better than usual.
4. How long have you been in retail sales? _____years
5. How long have you been selling for this particular store? _____years
6. How long have you been selling this line of products? _____years
7. I am paid by:
 - _____ commission.
 - _____ straight salary/hourly wage.
 - _____ combination commission and salary.
8. What is your marital status? _____Married _____Single
9. What is your sex? _____Male _____Female
10. Education: _____high school or less _____high school graduate
 _____college graduate _____post graduate
11. Age: _____years
12. Please indicate your total family income before taxes:

_____ Below \$9,999	_____ \$20,000-24,999
_____ \$10,000-14,999	_____ \$25,000-29,999
_____ \$15,000-19,999	_____ More than \$30,000

CUSTOMER QUESTIONNAIRE

SALESPERSON AND SALES PRESENTATION: Listed below are a number of statements relating to the salesperson you have just been talking with. Please read these statements. Comparing this salesperson to others you have dealt with, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with these statements by circling the appropriate number.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNCERTAIN	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. This salesperson genuinely enjoyed helping me.	1	2	3	4	5
2. This salesperson was <u>not</u> forceful.	1	2	3	4	5
3. This salesperson's main concern was to sell the merchandise.	1	2	3	4	5
4. This salesperson was easy to talk with.	1	2	3	4	5
5. This salesperson tried to establish a personal relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
6. This salesperson did <u>not</u> try to impress me with himself.	1	2	3	4	5
7. This salesperson was <u>not</u> very persistent.	1	2	3	4	5
8. This salesperson was interested in socializing.	1	2	3	4	5
9. This salesperson worked hard to complete the sale.	1	2	3	4	5
10. This salesperson was friendly.	1	2	3	4	5
11. This salesperson really wants to be appreciated by others.	1	2	3	4	5
12. This salesperson wanted to do the sales job well.	1	2	3	4	5
13. This salesperson was forceful.	1	2	3	4	5
14. This salesperson wanted to complete the sale.	1	2	3	4	5
15. This salesperson was <u>not</u> concerned with doing the best job possible.	1	2	3	4	5
16. This salesperson was <u>not</u> a cooperative person.	1	2	3	4	5
17. This salesperson seemed more interested in himself than in me.	1	2	3	4	5
18. This salesperson tried to impress me with himself.	1	2	3	4	5
19. This salesperson likes to help customers.	1	2	3	4	5
20. This salesperson was very persistent.	1	2	3	4	5
21. This salesperson really wants to be admired by others.	1	2	3	4	5
22. This salesperson was more interested in what he had to say than in what I had to say.	1	2	3	4	5
23. This salesperson talked about his own personal difficulties.	1	2	3	4	5
24. This salesperson's primary concern was to help me make a purchase.	1	2	3	4	5
25. This salesperson tried to dominate the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5

	SA	A	U	D	SD
26. This salesperson seemed interested in me not only as a customer, but also as a person.	1	2	3	4	5
27. This salesperson was concerned with doing the best job possible.	1	2	3	4	5
28. This salesperson was a cooperative person.	1	2	3	4	5

PRODUCT: Please answer the following questions about the product you were considering to purchase by filling in the appropriate blanks.

- If you bought or were shopping for a product from this store, what product was it?

- Have you owned this kind of product before? ☐ yes ☐ no
- If so, was it the same brand? ☐ yes ☐ no ☐ uncertain
- Compared to similar products, I think I will (or would) like the product I just bought or examined for purchase.
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Product was not available
- How important was this purchase decision compared to other purchase decisions?
☐ Very important ☐ Unimportant ☐ Neutral
☐ Important ☐ Very unimportant
- How certain were you that you would make a purchase before you came into the store?
☐ Uncertain ☐ Somewhat certain ☐ Neutral
☐ Somewhat uncertain ☐ Certain
- Please give an indication of how well you knew this salesperson before you came into the store today (include both personal and store contact with the salesperson).
☐ I did not know this salesperson.
☐ I knew this salesperson.
☐ I knew this salesperson very well.

DEMOGRAPHICS: This information is requested for classification purposes only. It will make the results of the survey more meaningful.

- What is your marital status? ☐ Single ☐ Married
- What is your sex? ☐ Male ☐ Female
- Education: ☐ high school or less ☐ high school graduate
☐ college graduate ☐ post graduate
- Age: _____ years
- While talking with this salesperson, my overall mood was:
☐ Much worse than usual ☐ Better than usual
☐ Worse than usual. ☐ Much better than usual.
☐ As it usually is.
- Please indicate your total family income before taxes:
☐ Below \$9,999 ☐ \$20,000-24,999
☐ \$10,000-14,999 ☐ \$25,000-29,999
☐ \$15,000-19,999 ☐ More than \$30,000

SUBSTUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

The University of Tennessee School of Business is conducting a study of retail sales. Please help us in this effort by completing the following items. Thank you.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these statements by circling the appropriate number.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I will probably shop in this store again.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My overall opinion of the store was favorable.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My overall opinion of the salesperson was favorable.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My overall opinion of the sales presentation was favorable.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My overall opinion of the product(s) I just bought or examined for purchase was favorable.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The amount of this sale was _____.					

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF STUDY VARIABLES AND MEASURES USED

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF STUDY VARIABLES AND MEASURES USED

Customer Variables

Customer communication style ¹	Salesperson questionnaire, Items 1-28 under customer section
Information and experience	
Predisposition to purchase ¹	Customer questionnaire, Item 6 under product section
Experience with product:	
Same product ²	" " Item 2 " " "
Same brand ³	" " Item 3 " " "
Purchase importance ¹	" " Item 5 " " "
Previous experience with salesperson ³	" " Item 7 " " "
Product examined ⁴	" " Item 1 " " "
Product in/out of stock ²	Salesperson questionnaire, Item 1 under demographics section
Store activity level ³	Interviewer questionnaire, last item
Personal-role characteristics and requirements	
Age ²	Customer questionnaire, Item 4 under demographics section
Sex ²	" " Item 2 " " "
Marital status ²	" " Item 1 " " "
Education ⁵	" " Item 3 " " "
Income ⁶	" " Item 6 " " "
Affective state ¹	" " Item 5 " " "
First to approach ²	Interviewer questionnaire, last item before style ratings section

Salesperson Variables

Salesperson communication style ¹	Customer questionnaire, Items 1-28 under salesperson and sales presentation section.
Information and experience	
Retail sales experience ⁴	Salesperson questionnaire, Item 4 under demographics section
Store sales experience ⁴	" " Item 5 " " "
Product sales experience ⁴	" " Item 6 " " "
Compensation plan ³	" " Item 7 " " "
Full/parttime status ²	Interviewer asked store manager and recorded for each salesperson
Product examined ⁴	Customer questionnaire, Item 1 under product section
Product in/out of stock ²	Salesperson questionnaire, Item 1 under demographics section
Store activity level ³	Interviewer questionnaire, last item
Personal-role characteristics and requirements	
Age ²	Salesperson questionnaire, Item 11 under demographics section
Sex ²	" " Item 9 " " "
Marital status ²	" " Item 8 " " "
Education ⁵	" " Item 10 " " "
Income ⁶	" " Item 12 " " "
Affective state ¹	" " Item 3 " " "
First to approach ²	Interviewer questionnaire, last item before style ratings section

¹This item was measured with a five-point scale.

²This item was measured with a two-point scale.

³This item was measured with a three-point scale.

⁴This item was open-ended.

⁵This item was measured with a four-point scale.

⁶This item was measured with a six-point scale.

Interaction Results Variables

Buy/no buy ¹	Salesperson questionnaire, Item 2 under demographics section and substudy questionnaire, Item 6
Amount of sale ¹	" " " "
Number of interactions ²	Interviewer questionnaire, top section
Time in store ²	" " " "
Time in transaction ²	" " " "
Evaluation of salesperson ¹	Substudy questionnaire, Item 3
Evaluation of product ¹	Customer questionnaire, Item 4 under product section and substudy questionnaire, Item 5
Evaluation of store ¹	Substudy questionnaire, Item 2
Evaluation of sales presentation ¹	" " Item 4
Future store trips ¹	" " Item 1

¹This item was measured with a five-point scale.

²This item was open-ended.

APPENDIX E

SUPPLEMENTARY TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE E-1

ADJUSTED ITEM-SCALE CORRELATIONS FOR THE CUSTOMER ITEMS

Customer Items	Scale		
	Task	Self	Inter- action
This customer wanted to complete his shopping as effectively as possible	.72	-	-
This customer wanted to finish the shopping task	.74	-	-
This customer tried hard to complete the shopping task	.65	-	-
This customer's main concern was to finish his shopping	.69	-	-
This customer's primary concern was to make a purchase	.58	-	-
This customer talked about his own personal difficulties	-	.14	-
This customer was forceful	-	.24	-
This customer was primarily interested in what he had to say and not in what I had to say	-	.30	-
This customer tried to dominate the conversation	-	.37	-
This customer was more interested in himself than in the product or what I had to say	-	.38	-
This customer tried to impress me with himself	-	.49	-
This customer really wants to be admired by others	-	.14	-
This customer tried to establish a personal relationship	-	-	.69
This customer seemed interested in me not only as a salesperson, but also as a person	-	-	.74
This customer genuinely enjoyed my helping him	-	-	.68
This customer likes to talk to people	-	-	.74
This customer was easy to talk with	-	-	.69
This customer was friendly	-	-	.66
This customer was interested in socializing	-	-	.61

TABLE E-2

ADJUSTED ITEM-SCALE CORRELATIONS FOR THE SALESPERSON ITEMS

Salesperson Items	Scale		
	Task	Self	Inter- action
This salesperson worked hard to complete the sale	.58	-	-
This salesperson wanted to do the sales job well	.67	-	-
This salesperson wanted to complete the sale	.54	-	-
This salesperson was concerned with doing the best job possible	.36	-	-
This salesperson's primary concern was to help me make a purchase	.47	-	-
This salesperson was forceful	-	.22	-
This salesperson tried to impress me with himself	-	.23	-
This salesperson seemed more interested in himself than in me	-	.39	-
This salesperson really wanted to be admired by others	-	.14	-
This salesperson was more interested in what he had to say than in what I had to say	-	.55	-
This salesperson talked about his own personal difficulties	-	.36	-
This salesperson tried to dominate the conversation	-	.46	-
This salesperson genuinely enjoyed helping me	-	-	.63
This salesperson was easy to talk with	-	-	.59
This salesperson tried to establish a personal relationship	-	-	.41
This salesperson was interested in socializing	-	-	.37
This salesperson was friendly	-	-	.52
This salesperson was a cooperative person	-	-	.32
This salesperson likes to help customers	-	-	.59
This salesperson seemed interested in me not only as a customer, but also as a person	-	-	.64

TABLE E-3

COMBINED SITUATIONAL/DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS: MEANS
AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS BY CUSTOMER STYLE MIX

Characteristics	Customer Style Mix		
	Interactors	Task Completers	Browsers
Customer Characteristics:			
Predisposition to purchase	4.09 (1.30)	3.48 (1.65)	3.07 (1.48)
Customer's experience with product:	1.27	1.44	1.49
Same brand	(.98)	(1.06)	(.98)
Purchase importance	2.48 (1.06)	2.63 (1.12)	2.38 (1.04)
Previous experience with salesperson	1.31 (.61)	1.05 (.27)	1.20 (.50)
Customer's sex	1.37 (.49)	1.34 (.54)	1.16 (.41)
Customer's marital status	1.65 (.48)	1.43 (.56)	1.45 (.53)
Customer's income	3.92 (2.10)	3.18 (2.25)	4.01 (2.08)
Salesperson Characteristics:			
Retail sales experience	2.48 (1.06)	2.60 (1.12)	2.13 (1.04)
Store sales experience	1.69 (1.30)	1.80 (1.65)	1.68 (1.48)
Compensation plan	2.03 (.61)	2.08 (.27)	2.19 (.50)
Full/parttime status	1.54 (.50)	1.32 (.47)	1.52 (.50)
Product in/out of stock*	1.76 (.54)	1.71 (.54)	1.41 (.71)
Salesperson's age	2.10 (1.24)	2.13 (1.01)	2.36 (1.11)
Salesperson's marital status	1.68 (.47)	1.74 (.44)	1.70 (.46)
Salesperson's education	2.48 (.78)	2.34 (.64)	2.45 (.72)
Salesperson's income	2.81 (2.22)	2.46 (1.91)	3.25 (2.12)
Salesperson's mood	3.23 (.68)	2.86 (.80)	2.81 (.94)
First to approach*	1.16 (.37)	1.21 (.41)	1.01 (.12)

*These variables may be considered as either a customer or salesperson characteristic

TABLE E-4

COMBINED SITUATIONAL/DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS: MEANS
AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS BY SALESPERSON STYLE MIX

Characteristics	Salesperson Style Mix		
	Super Sellers	Moderate Sellers	Inactive Sellers
Salesperson Characteristics:			
Retail sales experience	2.54 (1.49)	2.35 (1.45)	2.34 (1.47)
Store sales experience	1.86 (1.17)	1.64 (.98)	1.60 (.93)
Product sales experience	1.97 (1.22)	.77 (1.21)	.87 (1.18)
Compensation plan	2.15 (.45)	2.06 (.24)	2.02 (.14)
Full/parttime status	1.43 (.50)	1.48 (.50)	1.47 (.50)
Salesperson's age	2.34 (1.19)	2.10 (1.11)	1.98 (.89)
Salesperson's education	2.40 (.73)	2.35 (.63)	2.58 (.80)
Salesperson's income	2.76 (2.08)	2.70 (2.08)	3.08 (2.18)
First to approach*	1.12 (.33)	1.16 (.37)	1.13 (.34)
Customer Characteristics:			
Predisposition to purchase	4.08 (1.39)	3.24 (1.53)	3.11 (1.55)
Customer's experience with product:	1.23	1.21	1.13
Same product	(.42)	(.41)	(.39)
Same brand	1.36 (1.04)	1.33 (.98)	1.57 (.99)
Purchase importance	2.30 (1.10)	2.57 (1.09)	2.83 (1.00)
Previous experience with salesperson	1.32 (.62)	1.08 (.31)	1.08 (.33)
Customer's age	2.58 (1.36)	2.29 (1.08)	2.26 (1.21)
Customer's sex	1.37 (.48)	1.33 (.47)	1.13 (.52)
Customer's education	2.55 (.95)	2.67 (.95)	2.66 (1.14)
Customer's affective state	3.29 (.65)	3.10 (.61)	3.04 (.83)

*This variable may be considered as either a customer or salesperson characteristic

TABLE E-5
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF DEPENDENT VARIABLES
BY CUSTOMER STYLE-MIX GROUPS

Dependent Variable	Customer Groups	
	Interactors	Task Completers Browsers
Amount of sale	2.43 (1.18)	2.29 (1.13) 1.71 (1.24)
Product evaluation*	1.88 (1.32)	2.32 (1.69) 2.16 (1.43)
Number of interactions	35.70 (30.98)	24.69 (27.46) 36.65 (41.51)
Time in store	11.73 (11.84)	10.74 (15.07) 11.48 (15.10)
Time in transaction	11.45 (11.81)	8.89 (6.81) 9.39 (6.55)

*This variable was reverse coded

TABLE E-6
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF DEPENDENT VARIABLES
BY SALESPERSON STYLE-MIX GROUPS

Dependent Variable	Salesperson Groups		
	Super Sellers	Moderate Sellers	Inactive Sellers
Amount of sale	2.44 (1.27)	1.94 (1.10)	2.00 (1.18)
Product evaluation*	2.01 (1.60)	2.12 (1.30)	2.34 (1.60)
Number of interactions	40.84 (40.26)	23.23 (17.21)	27.42 (33.24)
Time in store	11.52 (10.66)	9.95 (14.08)	13.02 (19.03)
Time in transaction	10.95 (10.42)	8.43 (6.80)	10.34 (8.41)

*This variable was reverse coded .

TABLE E-7
MEANS FOR MATCHED STYLE-MIX GROUPS BY THE DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Customer	Matched Groups Salesperson	Dependent Variables				
		n	Amount of Sale	Product Evaluation	Number of Inter- actions	Time in Store Time in Trans- action
Interacter (HLH)	Super Seller (HLH)	4	2.75	1.75	29.25	7.00
Interacter (HLH)	Moderate Seller (MLM)	30	2.20	2.27	17.73	9.00
Interacter (HLH)	Inactive Seller (LLM)	23	1.52	2.13	26.35	14.61
Task Completer (HLM)	Super Seller (HLH)	34	2.94	1.97	45.76	12.29
Task Completer (HLM)	Moderate Seller (MLM)	83	2.23	2.12	29.47	9.92
Task Completer (HLM)	Inactive Seller (LLM)	38	1.84	2.00	49.26	10.95
Browser (LLM)	Super Seller (HLH)	6	2.67	2.50	24.50	15.00
Browser (LLM)	Moderate Seller (MLM)	19	2.42	2.11	19.84	16.68
Browser (LLM)	Inactive Seller (LLM)	14	1.29	2.36	26.57	9.86

n = number of matched groups in each category

Note: The categorization of H(High), M(Moderate), and L(Low) indicates the relative style scale value for the task, self, and interaction orientations, respectively, of the style-mix groups

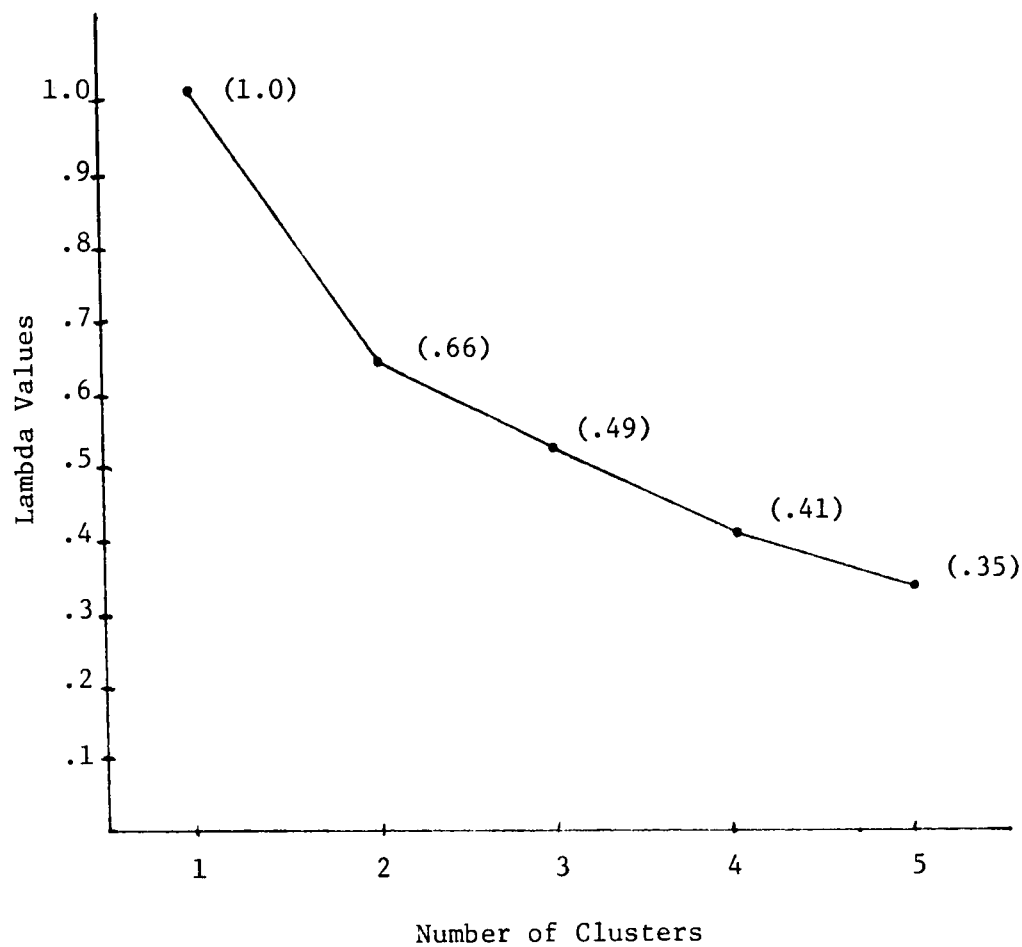


Figure E-1. Plot of lambda values for the customers.

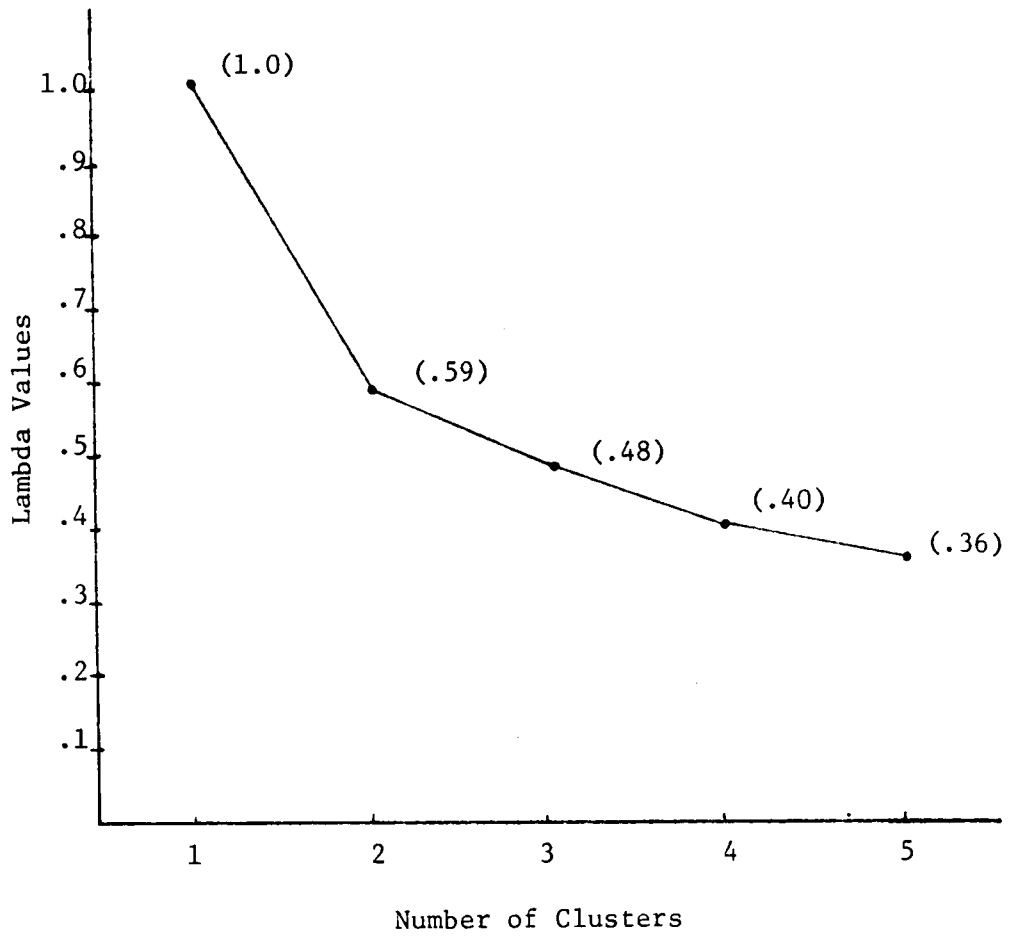


Figure E-2. Plot of lambda values for the salespeople.

APPENDIX F

UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS RESULTS

APPENDIX F

UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS RESULTS

The average style scores and standard deviations across all respondents, across all salespeople, and across all customers were computed. These statistics are presented in Table F-1. As noted in Table F-1 (across all respondents), the task and interaction categories are scored higher than the self category, indicating that people generally tend to use more of the interaction- or task-oriented strategies. However, this may be due to a response bias. That is, the self items may be seen as more negative than the task and interaction items. Additionally, people may not be able to assess or feel comfortable with assessing another individual in terms of the self items.

The average style scores for customers indicate that the average customer of the sampled sporting goods stores is high on the task (3.53) and interaction (3.29) dimensions but lower on the self (2.23) dimension. A similar pattern exists for the salespeople; however, these average scores are more extreme for the salespeople than for the customers. This suggests that the customers form stronger judgments about the salespeople than vice versa. The customer's role may require a greater involvement with judging (e.g., about the store, product, price, and so forth) than the salesperson's role. The salesperson's role probably requires a fairer and more equitable disposition toward the customers. Also, the salesperson's lower self

TABLE F-1

STYLE USE MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS ACROSS CUSTOMERS,
SALESPEOPLE, AND ALL RESPONDENTS

Style	Average Scores
Customers:	
Task	3.53 (.83)
Self	2.23 (.43)
Interaction	3.29 (.72)
Salespeople:	
Task	3.87 (.70)
Self	1.89 (.48)
Interaction	3.95 (.56)
All respondents:	
Task	3.70 (.59)
Self	2.06 (.33)
Interaction	3.62 (.53)

score may reflect the fact that the salesperson's performance is dependent on his ability to focus on and deal with the other person.

The metric and nonparametric correlations between the average style scores for the customers and the salespeople and their situational and demographic variables are presented in Tables F-2 and F-3, respectively. In addition, Table F-4 presents the inter-correlations among the situational and demographic variables. Correlations are used to summarize the strength of association between pairs of variables. Pearson's correlation coefficient is used for the metrically scaled variables, while Kendall's Tau correlation coefficient is used for the nonmetrically scaled variables. The Kendall Tau correlation coefficient is used because it yields a close approximation to the product moment correlation coefficients and is a more appropriate nonparametric measure than the Spearman correlation when a large number of cases are classified into a relatively small number of categories.

These results show that the customer's average style score for task is significantly associated with the customer's predisposition to purchase, whether the product is in or out of stock, the customer's sex, which member of the dyad is the first to approach the other member, and the salesperson's compensation plan. The customer's average score for the self-oriented style is significantly associated with whether the customer has previously owned the same kind of product, which member of the dyad is the first to approach the other member, the salesperson's marital status, and the salesperson's affective state. The customer's average style score for interaction is significantly associated with the customer's predisposition to

TABLE F-2

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN CUSTOMER STYLE SCALES AND
SITUATIONAL/DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics	Customer Style Scale		
	Task	Self	Interaction
Customer:			
Predisposition to purchase*	.21 ^a	-.01	.27 ^b
Experience with product:			
Same product**	.06	.10 ^d	.05 ^d
Same brand**	-.04	-.06	-.09 ^d
Purchase importance*	.09	-.04	-.10
Previous experience with salesperson*	.01	-.05	.32 ^a
Product examined**	.02	-.07	.03
Product in/out of stock**	.16 ^a	-.01	.09 ^a
Store activity level*	-.05	.01	.02
Age*	-.04 ^b	-.09	.21 ^a
Sex**	.14 ^b	-.03	.03 ^b
Marital status**	.05	-.03	.13 ^b
Education*	-.03	.10	.04
Income*	-.05	.04	.08 ^c
Affective state*	-.02 ^d	-.01 ^b	.14 ^c
First to approach**	.09 ^d	.13 ^b	-.01
Salesperson:			
Retail sales experience*	.09	-.07	.06
Store sales experience*	-.02	-.10	.09
Product sales experience*	.02	-.07	.11
Compensation plan**	-.11 ^c	-.01	.06
Full/parttime status**	-.04	.04	.05
Age*	-.07	.00	.08 ^d
Sex**	-.02	.07 ^b	-.09 ^d
Marital status**	-.02	-.15 ^b	.02
Education*	.04	.02	.07
Income*	-.09	-.01	.07 ^a
Affective state*	.06	-.23 ^a	.30 ^a

*Uses Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (Parametric)

**Uses Kendall's Tau (Nonparametric)

^aCorrelation significant at .001 level or beyond

^bCorrelation significant at .01 level or beyond

^cCorrelation significant at .05 level or beyond

^dCorrelation significant at .10 level or beyond

TABLE F-3

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SALESPERSON STYLE SCALES AND
SITUATIONAL/DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics	Salesperson Style Scale		
	Task	Self	Interaction
Salesperson:			
Retail sales experience*	.02	-.17 ^b	.01
Store sales experience*	.08	-.07	.05
Product sales experience*	.05	-.06	.03
Compensation plan**	.13 ^c	-.10 ^d	.19 ^a
Full/parttime status**	-.04	.08	-.02
Product examined**	.03	-.03	.01
Product in/out of stock**	.09 ^d	-.03	.06
Store activity level*	.10	.01	.06
Age*	.04	-.19 ^b	.08
Sex**	.08	-.06 ^d	.04
Marital status**	.06	.10 ^d	.00
Education*	-.05	-.07	.04
Income*	-.04	.02	.04
Affective state*	-.00	-.02	.06
First to approach**	.03	-.00	-.03
Customer:			
Predisposition to purchase*	.22 ^a	-.16 ^b	.18 ^b
Experience with product:			
Same product**	.07	-.01	.06
Same brand**	.00	-.07	.00
Purchase importance*	-.21 ^a	.13 ^c	-.21 ^a
Previous experience with salesperson*	.10	-.13 ^c	.27 ^a
Age*	.14 ^c	-.14 ^c	.13 ^c
Sex**	.07	-.12 ^c	.04
Marital status**	.05	-.02	.05
Education*	-.06	-.05	-.05
Income*	.04	.02	.04
Affective state*	.10	-.04	.17 ^b

*Uses Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (Parametric)

**Uses Kendall's Tau (Nonparametric)

^aCorrelation significant at .001 level or beyond

^bCorrelation significant at .01 level or beyond

^cCorrelation significant at .05 level or beyond

^dCorrelation significant at .10 level or beyond

TABLE F-4
INTER-CORRELATIONAL MATRIX OF SITUATIONAL/DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	
1. Predispotion to purchase*	1.00																										
2. Experience with product:																											
3. Same products**		-.04	1.00																								
4. Same brands**		-.16 ^a	-.63 ^a	1.00																							
5. Purchase importance		-.03	-.10 ^a	.11 ^a	1.00																						
6. Previous experience with salesperson*		.22 ^a	-.07	-.03	-.05	1.00																					
7. Product examined**		.04	.11 ^a	.15	.01	.04	1.00 ^c																				
8. Customer's age*		-.02	.05	.00	-.16 ^c	.04	.10 ^c	1.00 ^d																			
9. Customer's sex**		.01	.16 ^c	-.10 ^b	-.11 ^b	-.05	-.03	.10 ^d	1.00																		
10. Customer's marital status**		-.00	.01	-.01	-.16 ^b	.09	.10	.60 ^a	.26 ^a	1.00																	
11. Customer's education*		-.01	-.02	.04	.12 ^a	-.06 ^b	.02	.26 ^a	-.10	.16 ^a	1.00																
12. Customer's income**		.04	-.01	-.09	-.00	.20 ^b	.01	.16 ^a	.12 ^a	.27 ^a	.09	1.00															
13. Affective state*		.04	-.09	-.04	-.09	.19 ^a	.01	.10	.02	-.08	.09	.08	1.00														
14. Retail sales experience*		.11 ^a	-.10 ^b	.03	-.05	.08	.12 ^c	.01	.05	.04	.07	-.00	-.03	1.00													
15. Store sales experience*		.11 ^a	-.16 ^c	.04	.04	.09	.13 ^c	.02	.01	-.05	.05	-.04	-.11 ^a	.52 ^a	1.00												
16. Product sales experience*		.16 ^c	-.11 ^a	.01	.03	.13	.14 ^b	.02	-.00	.27 ^a	.07	.00	-.16 ^c	.60 ^a	.88 ^a	1.00											
17. Compensation plans**		.03	.01	.04	-.05	.22 ^a	.12	.08	-.06	.03	-.06	.01	.06	.17	.10	.06	1.00										
18. Full/parttime status**		-.06	.03	.01	.06	-.08	.15	-.05	-.04	-.02	.03	-.01	.03	-.23 ^a	-.11 ^d	-.12 ^c	.01	1.00									
19. Product in/out stock**		.15	.04	-.13	-.04	.01	-.01	-.00	.04	-.04	.03	.10	-.04	.04	.08	.09	.05	.21 ^a	1.00								
20. Store activity level*		.02	-.04	.02	-.01	.03	.05	.00	.10 ^b	.03	-.04	.07	.02	.02	-.01	-.06	.23 ^a	-.04	.11 ^a	1.00							
21. First to approach**		-.02	.11 ^a	-.06	.03	-.04	.16 ^b	.08	.01	.09	.03	.03	-.02	-.00	.03	-.01	-.08	-.09	.12 ^a	-.07	1.00						
22. Salesperson's age*		.15	-.07	.07	-.11 ^a	.12 ^a	.15 ^b	.03	.05	.04	.06	-.07	-.00	.52 ^a	.23 ^a	.23 ^a	-.27 ^a	-.10 ^a	.11 ^a	-.04	1.00						
23. Salesperson's sex**		.09	-.02	.05	-.12 ^a	-.04	.04	.12	.09	.09	-.01	-.01	.02	.06	-.01	-.02	-.03	.04	-.04	-.05	.16 ^b	.25 ^a	1.00				
24. Salesperson's marital status**		-.09	.10 ^b	-.10 ^b	.03	-.03	-.05	.01	-.08	-.07	.06	-.08	.00	-.33 ^a	-.15 ^b	-.19 ^a	-.08	.34 ^a	.12 ^a	.11 ^d	-.43 ^a	-.12 ^c	1.00				
25. Salesperson's education*		.03	-.01	.03	-.12 ^a	.08	.09 ^d	.00	-.11 ^a	.02	.08	.16 ^c	.08	.12 ^a	.02	-.09	-.06	.12 ^a	-.01	.22 ^a	-.17	-.20 ^b	.100	1.00			
26. Salesperson's income**		.00	-.05	.05	.01	.01	-.12 ^c	-.02	.07	-.00	.02	.11 ^a	-.02	-.05	.09	.02	.04	.01	.02	.10 ^a	.04	.08	.03	-.22 ^a	.11 ^a	1.00	
27. Salesperson's affective state*		.16 ^b	-.08	.02	.02	.16 ^c	.11 ^c	.11 ^d	-.12 ^a	.01	.02	-.04	.10	.00	.09	-.00	-.04	.12 ^a	.07	-.09	-.00	-.03	-.06	.12	.02	-.02	1.00

*Uses Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (Parametric)

**Uses Kendall's Tau (Nonparametric)

^aCorrelation significant at .001 level or beyond

^bCorrelation significant at .01 level or beyond

^cCorrelation significant at .05 level or beyond

^dCorrelation significant at .10 level or beyond

purchase, the customer's previous ownership of the same brand, the customer's previous experience with the salesperson, the customer's age, the customer's marital status, the customer's affective state, the salesperson's sex, and the salesperson's affective state. Several relationships may be suggested by these correlations. For example, it appears that someone who knows what he wants to buy before he goes into the store may be more task-oriented. That is, a customer who knows what he wants seems to be more likely to get directly to the task of making his purchase. It also appears that the customer tends to be more interactive when he knows what he wants, knows the salesperson, and is in a good mood.

The situational and demographic variables are also correlated with the average style scores of the salespeople. As noted in Table F-3, the average task-oriented style scores for the salespeople are significantly associated with the salesperson's compensation plan, whether the product is in or out of stock, how predisposed the customer is to purchase, the importance of the purchase to the customer, and the customer's age. The average scores for the self-oriented style are significantly associated with the following variables: the salesperson's experience in retail sales, the salesperson's compensation plan, the salesperson's age, the salesperson's marital status, the customer's predisposition to purchase, the importance of the purchase to the customer, the customer's previous experience with the salesperson, and the customer's age. The average interaction-oriented style scores for the salespeople are significantly associated with the salesperson's compensation plan, the customer's predisposition to purchase, the importance of the

purchase to the customer, the customer's previous experience with the salesperson, the customer's age, and the customer's education. Overall, the compensation plan as well as the customer's predisposition to purchase appear to be critical variables in the salesperson's use of communication style. For example, if the salesperson is on a commission plan and/or perceives the customer as having a high amount of predisposition to purchase, then he may be more highly motivated to provide the customer with quicker and better service.

As noted above, there are significant correlations between the style scales and the various demographic and situational characteristics. As seen in Tables F-2 and F-3, however, these correlations seem weak. This may be due to the large number of in-store variables which also affect the interaction between the customer and the salesperson.

An examination of the average demographics for the customer and the salesperson found some interesting differences and similarities between salespeople and customers. The sample of salespeople ($n=64$) was composed of 38 males (59.4%) and 26 females (40.6%). A comparison of these proportions with those of the customer, 167 males (66.5%) and 80 females (31.9%), indicated that a greater proportion of salespeople are female and, as such, the customers and salespeople were not similarly proportioned on the physical trait of sex. Also, the average age of the salesperson, 27, was close to that of the customer, 30. However, they were not similarly proportioned on marital status. As could be expected, a greater proportion of retail clerks were single. Also, the salespeople tended to have a lower educational level (37.1% with college degrees) than customers (52.2% with

college degrees) and lower incomes. Thirty percent of the salespeople listed incomes over \$20,000 and 45% of the customers listed incomes over \$20,000.

VITA

Kaylene Carol Williams was born in Topeka, Kansas on January 26, 1950. She attended elementary school in Topeka, Kansas and graduated from Topeka High School in June 1968. The following September she entered Washburn University in Topeka. After moving to California, she transferred to California State University at Sacramento. In June 1973 she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology. In September 1974 she began study towards a Master's Degree in Business Administration at California State University at Sacramento. This degree was awarded in December 1976.

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The author is a member of the American Marketing Association, the Southern Marketing Association, the Southwestern Marketing Association, Beta Gamma Sigma, and Phi Kappa Phi. She was a fellow at the American Marketing Association Doctoral Consortium and the Albert Haring Symposium. She received a Bonham Fellowship from the College of Business Administration at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville for work on her dissertation. In addition, she received a Chancellor's Citation for Extraordinary Professional Promise. Ms. Williams is an assistant professor of marketing at The University of Delaware in Newark.