Studying the Factors Influencing the Relational Behaviors of Sales Department Staff
(Case Study: The Companies Distributing Medicine, Food and Hygienic and Cosmetic Products in Arak City)

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Abstract: The present study has been conducted with the title of studying the factors influencing the relational behaviors of the staff of sales department of the companies which distribute medicine, food and hygienic and cosmetic products in Arak city. On the basis of the research objective, the research method is of applied type and in terms of research method it is considered as a causal research. In the present study, the statistical population consists of all the companies which distribute medicine, food and hygienic and cosmetic products in Arak city that 38 companies were selected. The data collection tool was questionnaire that from 240 questionnaires distributed among the companies, only 212 questionnaires were usable and the sampling method was a convenient sampling and for data analysis the statistical technique of structural equation and LISREL software were used and for the reliability and validity of questionnaire the opinion of experts and Cronbach Alpha method was used. This study has 4 hypotheses. Among the four hypotheses, only hypothesis 3 was confirmed and the other three hypotheses were rejected. In this study it was found that there is a significant relationship between collective orientation (exchangeable orientation) of sellers and establishing communication with customers. Sellers have higher collective interest and tendencies towards helping and establishing enduring relationships with their customers and their behavior is based on emotions and feelings. As a result, because sellers are effective and important in achieving success in marketing and customer satisfaction, therefore considering their behavior in relation to customers and studying the factors influencing these behaviors seems necessary.

Keywords: Relational Behaviors of Staff, Enduring Relationships with Customers, Exchangeable Orientation
1. Introduction
In today's communication age, major developments are occurring in the activities of the sales staff and sales management practices and the company's sales staff play a key role in forming long-term relationships between the buyer and seller. In fact, they must be able to establish a long-term and favorable relationship with clients by their behaviors and maintain it. Sales force skills and features such as accountability, trust, friendship, commitment and honesty with the customers lead to establishing a long term relationship with the customer (Moghareh, 2008, 3).

Technological advances and development of a variety of products and services, has converted the market of producing and servicing companies to a highly competitive environment that the success and survival in this environment is considered as a concern for any organization. In this competitive market, the customer becomes the most vital element that ensures the survival of an organization. Meanwhile, the organizations are more successful that are able to obtain a higher status in the customer's mind. Application of proper marketing techniques can create a positive mental image of the organization and thus increase reliability. If an organization is able to act successfully in determining strategies of attracting customers, this trust can lead to the purchase from the organization and ultimately result in customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, analyzing the factors that could affect the customer's intention to purchase is one of the necessities in today's competitive world. Considering these descriptions, in this chapter, initially, a problem is raised in this regard, and after studying the theoretical framework in this context, assumptions and models are presented. Then, the objectives of the study are examined and definitions of terms used in the study are presented. The relationship that the seller establishes with the customer in marketing of industrial goods seems to be more sensitive and critical than consumer goods marketing, because in the sales of the industrial goods much of attempt is made by the seller and through personal sale, in a way that if the seller can attract the trust of customers to himself and ultimately to company, which is achieved through establishing good and appropriate communication with the customers, it will lead to better performance of marketing and ultimately customer loyalty and higher sales of the product (Heidarzadeh, 2009, 22).

In industrial marketing, communication between seller and buyer, and continuation of relationship between these two is of great importance and meanwhile, several factors are involved in relational behaviors of sellers with buyers which include emotions, feelings, collective and exchangeable orientation of sellers, in the recent years, the increased competitive pressures, rapid technological changes and short product life cycles. The relationship between the seller and customer requires long term, more durable, more participative and more interactive relationships and considering that so far no research has been conducted thoroughly about the relational behaviors of sellers, conducting researches with the subject of studying relational behaviors of sellers seems necessary. Because by the identification and study of the effective factors on relational behaviors of sellers and determination of positive and negative effects of these factors on relational behavior of sellers, we can take advantage of these factors in strengthening and improving enduring and continuous relationships between sellers and industrial customers and determine the reasons for establishing and developing sellers’ relationships with customers. In the meantime, there are factors that affect the relational behavior of sellers in industrial marketing. Empirical researches have shown the relationship between attributes of sellers in establishing communication with the customers. These attributes include familiarity, expertise, customization, regular similarity and power and relationships in the organization. Moreover, the nature of customer relationships and establishing a friendly relationship is not a new concept in business and it has been frequently mentioned in researches related to the marketing. There are many important issues that still have not been considered, for example, it is unclear why the sellers develop relationships with customers (Guo et al, 2012, 413). In general, relational behavior of sellers refers to a behavioral intention which is indicated by sales representatives of organizations to develop and nurture a strong relationship between buyer and the seller and to preserve it. In summary, the emphasis of previous researches was on results rather than factors affecting the relational behavior of sellers. Given the strategic role of sellers, the identification of factors influencing their selection and training and managing them can be very useful in this context. Hence it is necessary to enhance perception of managers towards the factors affecting the relational behavior of sellers. In this study we have tried to find an appropriate answer to the question that why the sellers develop relationships with customers.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Implications of research
2.1.1. Collective orientation of sellers:
Collective orientation of sellers are based on the criteria of personality and it is intended to assess whether people are willing to care and look after the welfare of others or not and whether do

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they have any expectations from others or not. Many studies have shown that people with high collective attitudes are more likely to help others as compared to those with lower collective attitudes (Guo et al. 2012, 415).

2-1-2. Perceived interaction of sellers from the customers: Perceived interaction of sellers from the customers is a close and effective communication between seller and customer and in this case the close relationships between seller and customer have both beneficial and harmful sides and may include incentives, economic and social stimuli, that are not always well-known in marketing researches (ibid, 414).

2-1-3. Interest of sellers towards customers: Relationships between the seller and customer are inherently interpersonal and findings suggest that the marketing relationships are based on mind and also relationships and emotions. The interest of sellers to customers lead to establishment, maintenance and development of long-term relationships (ibid, 415).

2-1-4. Exchangeable orientation of sellers: Clarke has created a personality criterion for assessing how much people are willing to trade in order to maintain relationships. Accordingly, people with exchangeable orientation are more interested in benefiting from other individuals (Ibid, 415).

2-1-5. Relational behaviors of sellers: In general, relational behavior of sellers refers to a behavioral intention which is indicated by sales representatives of organizations to develop and nurture a strong relationship between buyer and the seller and to preserve it. The extent to which such behavior can positively affect the relationship between the seller and buyer is dependent on customers’ expectations regarding the role that is played by the seller. Garousi has identified the concept and nature of relational behaviors of selling and he has assumed it as the concept of partnership and cooperation and intensity of interaction and mutual detection (ibid, 414).

2-1-6. Relationship marketing: Likhter has defined relationship marketing as follows: "A process that involves multiple parties through which the shared goals of intended parties are achieved through mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises made by the parties and for this reason, the trust is considered as a very important aspect of relationship marketing” (Bagheri, 35, 2011).

2-1-7. Customer relationship management: Business managers often tend to focus more on current customers rather than making their best to attract new customers, however, there is always need to create a balance between attracting new customers and keeping existing customers. It should be noted that while advertising to attract new customers, a proper planning should be made for the future, to preserve the new customers as loyal customers in the future (Ahmadi and Yahyazadehfar 2011, 32).

2-1-8. Sales technology: The technology of sales is as a combination of information technology tools that is used to distribute data and information collection and helps sales force in fulfilling the duties of sales. Examples of customer relationship management are video conferencing, email, etc. (Agni Houtr et al, 2009, 476).

2-2. Review of studies

Yavarri (2011) has conducted a study entitled as "exploring the effect of relationship marketing on customers of Mellat Bank in Tehran”. The purpose of this study was to evaluate effects of dimensions of relationship marketing including commitment, competence, communication and conflict management on loyalty of customers of Mellat Bank through the intermediary of trust and the quality of relationships. The results indicate a significant positive relationship between all aspects of relationship marketing with the quality of relationship and trust and also reliability and the quality of relationship with customer loyalty. Shirkhodae et al (2012) has conducted a study entitled as "examining the relationship between sales skills and sales staff performance: mediating role of job satisfaction”. Findings of the research show a positive and significant relationship between sales skills and sales performance of the experienced employees. It was also found that job satisfaction of the sales staff enhances the impact of sales skills of employee on their sales performance. A study has been conducted by Guo et al (2012). The purpose of this study was to examine factors stimulating relational behaviors of sellers in corporate marketing and finally they have found that perception of consequences, affected judgments and collective or exchangeable orientation of sellers will affect their behavior. In particular, collective orientation, mutual understanding of the customer and the customer’s willingness has a positive effect relational behavior, while exchangeable orientation has a negative impact on these behaviors.
2-3. Research model

![figure 1](image)

Figure 1. Conceptual model of research derived from studies of the Guo and colleagues, 2012

2-4. Research hypotheses

Perceived interaction of sellers from the customers has a positive impact on their relational behavior.
Interest of sellers towards customers has a positive impact on their relational behavior.
Sellers with collective orientations have more tendencies to communicate with the customers.
Sellers with exchangeable orientation have fewer tendencies to communicate with the customers.

3- Research methodology

3-1. Research Method

Considering that in this study we have examined the effects of perceived interaction of sellers from the customers and the interest of sellers towards customers on relational behavior, and the effect of their collective and exchangeable orientations on establishing a communication with customers, it is causal research and the extent and the way of influencing of each of the above factors was conducted by using structural equation modeling. The data collection tool was questionnaire and field method was used to collect data.

3-2. Statistical population and sample

The statistical population of the study consists of all the companies which distribute medicine, food and hygienic and cosmetic products in Arak city. So the statistical population is limited. In this study sample size was calculated according to the following formula:

$5q \leq n \leq 15q$

Since the number of questions of questionnaire was 20, the minimum sample should be between 300 and 100. According to the opinions of supervisor and advisor professors 240 questionnaires were distributed among the companies that only 212 questionnaires were usable and the sampling method was a convenient sampling.

3-3. Data collection method

In this study, for research data collection, scientific literature and library resources were used and in order to collect data related to the research hypotheses test, field method was used.

3-4. Data collection tools

In this study a questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire used in this study contains 20 questions which are about the subject of the study. The questions of the questionnaire are based on the questionnaire of Guo and colleagues (2012) article. Also at the beginning of questionnaire questions were raised for recognition of demographic characteristics of the statistical population, these components include: (age, gender, education). The number and composition of the research questions, based on the research variables, are presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relational behaviors of sellers</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived interaction of sellers from the customers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest of sellers towards customers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective orientation of sellers</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchangeable orientation of sellers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Composition of questions based on research variables

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3-5. Validity and reliability of questionnaire
Several methods are used for determining the validity of the tests; in the study logical method and content category have been used. In this case, the quantity and quality of the questions are examined from the perspective of the experts. In this way, in order to check the validity of the research and to achieve content validity the questionnaire applied in Guo and colleagues (2012) article and opinions of professors and advisors have been used. Also it was tried to analyze and evaluate research questionnaire by using the opinion of authorities and experts about the subject under discussion. Ultimately after applying the opinions of relevant professors and experts and revising the questionnaire, the final questionnaire was designed and distributed in a wider scale.
Also in the present study to assess the reliability of the scale, Cronbach’s alpha was used.

Cronbach’s alpha scale formula is as follows:

\[ r_a = \frac{N}{N-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum S_i^2}{S^2} \right) \]

In this formula:
- \( r_a \): The reliability coefficient
- \( N \): Number of questions
- \( S_i^2 \): The variance of the responses to \( i \)th questions

The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the initial 30 distributed questionnaires was equal to 0.831 and for the total respondents it was equal to 0.778. Given that the obtained coefficients are greater than 0.7 the reliability of the questionnaire is desirable.

3-6. Method of data analysis
In this study, in order to describe data analysis and research hypotheses test, inferential statistics and structural equation modeling approach was used.

4. Research findings
Initially standardized coefficients of research are calculated:

As it can be seen, in this model 5 latent variables (relational behaviors of sellers (RB), perceived interaction of sellers from the customers (PR), interest of sellers towards the customer (LC), collective orientation (CO) and exchangeable orientation (EO)) and measuring parameters are clearly shown.

4-2. Assessment of model fit
After modeling and estimation of its parameters, the first basic question that arises is that whether the measurement model is the appropriate measuring model is or not. The answer to this question is only possible by examining the fitness. The purpose of the fit model is that to what extent the model has consistency and agreement with the relevant data. To evaluate the fit of the research model indicators such as the degree of freedom of chi-square \( \chi^2/d \), root mean square error approximation (RMSEA), P-Value and CFI index are used. Root
mean square error approximation (RMSEA) is reported as a decimal and it is based on based on non-centrality parameter. For good models this indicator is equal to 0.05 or less. The models that their RMSEA is equal to 0.10 or more possess poor fitness. Comparative fit index (CFI) if is greater than 0.1 it is considered to be equal to 0.1 and if it is less than zero then it will be equal to zero and like the previous indicators, if the value of this fraction is between 90% to 95% it is considered as acceptable, while some researchers are using the cut-off point of 0.80 (ibid, 41). Another common indicator used to account for the free parameters in the fit index is the relative or normal chi-square which is calculated by simple division of chi-square value on the degree of freedom of the model that often values less than 5 are considered as acceptable for this indicator; however there are different views on this issue.

Among the fit indicators, generally, RMSEA is considered as the desirable indicator and CFI is considered as the best indicator. Fitness parameters are placed generally in the range between zero and one. Coefficients higher than 0.90 are considered as acceptable, although it is optional like the level P=0.05 (ibid, 43). In the present study, the calculated value for the RMSEA index are equal to the index 0.072 and GFI=0.86, IFI=0.81, SRMR = 0.080 and CFI =0.80 and $\chi^2/df$~2.085 which indicate the acceptability of the research model. The presented indices and their comparison with the desired value for the fitted model show a good fitting model. The remarkable point in the fit model is that while it confirms the fit of structural model it does not in any way prove that the model is the only valid model.

4-3. Results of testing research hypotheses
In this section we study the significance of the values obtained from the model; in terms of significance of values, it should be said that since in this study we seek to test the hypotheses at confidence level of 0.95 or error level of 0.05, for T-test numbers will be significant that are larger than the $-1.96$ and $+1.96$, which means that if in the t-test a value is between $-1.96$ and $+1.96$, it would be insignificant. In Figure 3, the values obtained for the t-test are significant and we can examine causal relationships (measuring indicators with latent variable) and impacts (latent variables altogether). With respect to the items listed in the tables and charts above, in terms of model fit indices the model is in good condition.

![Figure 3. Model in significant mode with t-value](image)

**4-3.1. Testing hypothesis 1**
Perceived interaction of sellers from the customers has a positive impact on their relational behavior. Path coefficient of latent exogenous variable of perceived interaction of sellers from the customers is $\gamma = 0.03$ and t-value is equal to 0.22 at error level 0.05 with confidence level of 0.95, the intended statistic is not significant. As a result, the null hypothesis regarding the absence of corresponding coefficient is accepted.

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4-3-2. Testing hypothesis 2
Interest of sellers towards customers has a positive impact on their relational behavior. Path coefficient of latent exogenous variable of interest of sellers towards customers on endogenous variable of relational behaviors of sellers is $\gamma_2 = 0.18$ and t-value is equal to 1.00 at error level 0.05 with confidence level of 0.95, the intended statistic is not significant. As a result, the null hypothesis regarding the absence of corresponding coefficient is accepted.

4-3-3. Testing hypothesis 3
Sellers with collective orientations have more tendencies to communicate with the customers. Path coefficient of latent exogenous variable of sellers with collective orientations on endogenous variable of relational behaviors of sellers is $\gamma_3 = 0.53$ and t-value is equal to 2.46 at error level 0.05 with confidence level of 0.95, the intended statistic is significant. As a result, the null hypothesis regarding the absence of corresponding coefficient is rejected.

4-3-4. Testing hypothesis 4
Sellers with exchangeable orientation have fewer tendencies to communicate with the customers. Path coefficient of latent exogenous variable of sellers with exchangeable orientation on endogenous variable of relational behaviors of sellers is $\gamma_4 = -0.14$ and t-value is equal to -1.50 at error level 0.05 with confidence level of 0.95, the intended statistic is not significant. As a result, the null hypothesis regarding the absence of corresponding coefficient is accepted.

Summary of the review of research hypotheses are shown in the table below.

### Table 2. Regression weights-factor loadings of research model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Estimated Amount</th>
<th>Standard Amount</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>t Statistics</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived interaction of sellers from the customers</td>
<td>Relational behaviors of sellers</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest of sellers towards customers</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective orientation of sellers</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchangeable orientation of sellers</td>
<td>A3</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchangeable orientation of sellers</td>
<td>A4</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchangeable orientation of sellers</td>
<td>A5</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchangeable orientation of sellers</td>
<td>A6</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>0.36</td>
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<td>B1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.53</td>
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<td>B2</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>0.50</td>
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<td>B3</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>0.24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest of sellers towards customers</td>
<td>C1</td>
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<td>0.64</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<tr>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective orientation of sellers</td>
<td>D2</td>
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<td>0.20</td>
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<td>Collective orientation of sellers</td>
<td>D3</td>
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<td>D4</td>
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<td>0.26</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchangeable orientation of sellers</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exchangeable orientation of sellers</td>
<td>E2</td>
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<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchangeable orientation of sellers</td>
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<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Discussion and conclusions
According to information obtained in the collective orientation of sellers, the highest average is 2.98 and it is related to the case that the sellers, to help the customers, are often deviated from their main goal which is to maximize the sales. The results of this hypothesis are consistent with research results of Guo and colleagues (2012). Considering that the studies of Guo et al (2012) have been conducted in China and England and the present study has been done in Iran and according to researches of Hofstede regarding the diversity of cultures, one of the dimensions of organizational culture is the individual and collective attitudes of people and managers employees of organizations in cultural terms possess collective (collectivism) or personal tendencies the according to the studies conducted about the organizational cultures in the research of (DOI: dx.doi.org/14.9831/1444-8939.2014/2-SI/MAGNT.26)
Hofstede, Iran in terms of collectivism and individualism is in the middle position and has ranked 24 among 53 countries of the world. In general, the Western industrialized countries such as America, Canada and Belgium have individual tendencies and Eastern countries like China and Korea have collective orientiations (Latifi, 2005). It is suggested that the sellers consider the customer goals and take into account the needs and feelings of the customers while making decisions, help customers when problems arise during sales process and by helping customers the feeling of satisfaction, pleasure and delight will be provoked in sellers.

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