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Customers' perceptions and reactions in waiting lines: lessons from a contact service environment in a developing economy

Alexander Appiah Cosmos Benjamin Osei

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Abstract & Keywords 

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Application of multi-grade fuzzy and ANFIS approaches for performance analysis of Lean Six Sigma system with sustainable considerations

R. Ben Ruben S. Vinodh P. Asokan

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Selling relationship quality to increase salesperson performance in the pharmacy industry

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Selling relationship quality to increase salesperson performance in the pharmacy industry

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Abstract: The success of a salesperson's performance is determined by several factors. However, the factors influencing the success are still debatable. This study involved 259 salespeople by distributing 350 questionnaires. A random sample technique was applied in the study. The collected data were analysed using: non-response bias, Amos 21.0 and Sobel test. The results of the study show that the adaptive selling does not have a direct effect on the salesperson performance, but it has a significant indirect positive effect on the selling relationship quality. The customer orientation and the learning orientation have a significant positive effect on the selling relationship quality and the salesperson performance. Additionally, limitations of the study and areas for future research are presented in this paper.

Keywords: pharmacy industry; adaptive selling; selling relationship quality; salesperson performance; customer orientation; learning orientation; customer networking; customer relationship; resources; customer respon capability; services.

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No. 1, pp.471–474, *Journal of Internet Banking and Commerce*, Vol. 21, No. 2, ISSN: 1204-5357, *International Review of Management and Marketing*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp.898–903, *Journal Market Trziste*, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp.189–202.

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1 Introduction

The pharmaceutical industry was selected as the research context as it is currently experiencing a rapid development as there is an increasing level of public awareness about health. The strategies used in business negotiations become very important such as approach individual sales into one solution, because each customer has different characteristics and level of uniqueness (Singh and Das, 2013). Today, more drugstore retailers and pharmacies have tougher competition. Therefore, it needs a good sales relationship quality (Oboreh et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2008).

Salesperson performance is required to understand customer characteristics (Sharma and Levy, 1995). Therefore, the salesperson performance has to apply adaptive selling behaviour (Roman and Iacobucci, 2010; Simintiras et al., 2013; Weitz et al., 1986). Adaptive selling can be identified as a method or way to meet customers' needs. The application of this method will create successful selling (Plouffe et al., 2009). Furthermore, to apply the adaptive selling, the salesperson performance has to be able to identify customers' characteristics, mood, and information necessity (Porter et al., 2003). The adaptive selling consists of collecting information about customers, developing selling strategies based on available information, applying selling strategies, evaluating effects, and creating adaptation based on evaluation.

The relationship between sellers and buyers is an important part of business (Choi and Kim, 2013; Gonzalez et al., 2014). The salesperson should be able to pay attention to the quality of the relationship built with customers. The customers who are satisfied with services provided by a salesperson will tend to continue doing business in a relatively long period of time (Drollinger and Comer, 2012; Hangjung Zo et al., 2013). Additionally, the salesperson who maintains the quality of the relationship with the customers will be able to improve the performance (Miao and Evans, 2013).

The salesperson performance quality can be affected by many factors which one of them is the marketing performance used to adapt to its environment of the adaptive selling (Abed and Haghghi, 2009; Jahandideh et al., 2013; Miao and Evans, 2013; Singh and Koshy, 2011). Other ways of successful selling can be affected by the salesperson's ability to attract customers' attention, board relations, interpersonal skills, and essential

motivation of salesperson performance (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Basir et al., 2010; Tanya and Comer, 2013).

However, studies show that there are inconsistent results of the relationship between the adaptive selling and the salesperson performance. For example, several studies show that the adaptive selling gives significant positive affect on salesperson performance (Abed and Haghghi, 2009; Artur and Cravens, 2002; Johlke, 2006), meanwhile other studies report that the adaptive selling does not have a significant positive affect on salesperson performance (Boorom et al., 1998; Keillor and Parker, 2000; Kidwell et al., 2007; Singh and Das, 2013).

The good relationship between the salesperson and customers can last a long time if the relationship is based on the principle of mutual benefits. Many things can be done to maintain a good sustainable relationship, such as salesperson's ability to provide good communication, the frequency of communication with the customers, a sale relationship that gives advantages, a dynamic sale relationship, and a technological factor as a supporting component that is very helpful to provide effective communication (Chen et al., 2013; Siddiquei et al., 2015; Tawinunt et al., 2015). Additionally, the confidence and satisfaction of the two parties between the salesperson and customers determine the quality of the sales relationships. Quality services are able to generate satisfaction and contentment that affect a long-lasting sales relationship (Khudri and Sultana, 2015; Seyoon and Jungwoo, 2014; Vatani et al., 2014).

The problem of this study is how to solve contradictive analysis results between the adaptive selling and the salesperson performance. If the selling increases, so does the company performance. This research is expected to be useful for the salesperson to increase his/her work capability. Another advantage is that selling managers can use the results of the analysis to increase the salesperson performance to be more successful. Thus, this research aims at solving inconsistent analysis results between the adaptive selling and the salesperson performance using selling relationship quality as an intervention variable.

2 Research objectives

- 1 To solve inconsistent analysis results between the adaptive selling and salesperson performance using the selling relationship quality as the intervention variable.
- 2 To analyse the relationship between the learning orientation, the selling relationship quality, and the customer orientation on the salesperson performance of the pharmacy industry in Indonesia.
- 3 To identify and analyse factors affecting the salesperson performance of the pharmacy industry in Indonesia.

3 Literature review

3.1 Adaptive selling

The success of sellers' activities is determined by many factors. One of them is customer adaptation (Abed and Haghghi, 2009). Adaptive selling is explained as capacity to

change the salesperson performance based on information collected when interacting with customers (Briggs et al., 2012; Chai et al., 2012; Jaramillo et al., 2007). Furthermore, information becomes an important part for sellers to create a modified interaction with customers (Franke and Park, 2006). The adaptation skills can be done through undertaking a flexible action in customer services, having various tricks of seller tasks, empowering knowledge about the products well, and being able to solve problems arisen by customers (Kim et al., 2011). Communication skills determine a successful salesperson performance. If the salespeople can provide good services for customers, they can preserve a good relationship with them, then it becomes a successful indicator for sellers (Kataria et al., 2013; Park et al., 2014; Zieliński, 2013).

The salesperson performance ability is used to highlight that marketing motivation is one of important factors for a successful salesperson. It can be done by selling products for new customers. The salesperson has to be creative in finding new ways for handling challenges, and looking for solutions when marketing target cannot be reached (Abed and Haghghi, 2009). Furthermore, the salesperson performance can also become a team as this team is able to change methods used to increase customer purchase (Arnett et al., 2003; How and Sorooshian, 2013).

The salesperson performance ability to adapt when interacting with customers is absolutely needed by a professional salesperson. Having emotional intelligence like competencies in sales, trying to do the best to achieve the goal, and having an ability to control the emotional would not be much beneficial for the salespeople if it is not accompanied by the ability to adapt with customers (Chakrabarty et al., 2014; Wisker and Poulis, 2015). The salesperson is required to adapt to customers when negotiating as it can improve the performance of sales (Hawes and Fleming, 2014). The salesperson orientation to customer-oriented sales will not directly affect the performance of the salesperson performance without being accompanied by the ability to adapt with the customers (David et al., 2014; Goad and Jaramillo, 2014).

3.2 Selling relationship quality

Based on resource views, the relation with the customers can be seen as real resource and market-based resources that may be relatively rare and difficult for rivals to replicate (Srivastava et al., 2001). Based on a marketing management context, we propose one variable called the marketing relation quality. It is a relation cohesiveness step between customers and salesperson performance developed as a long-term purpose. This relation quality can be delivered by marketing.

The other marketing relation qualities are quality system, quality information, and quality interactive design (Alhendawi and Baharudin, 2014). Trust is one of dominant factors influencing marketing relation quality. The customers who gain attention from sellers are characterised from trust to the salesperson performance. Customers who feel satisfied with the services given by sellers, they will do business continually for a long-term (Choi and Kim, 2013).

The salesperson performance can be seen by the customers well. The salesperson has to be able to respond customers' ideas quickly so that they will feel respected and satisfied. The salesperson also has to be able to use assuring gesture so that it can persuade customers, for example nodding head. Therefore, it can impact on customer purchase (Lüthje and Frey, 2011; Talib et al., 2011).

The quality of the customer experience also greatly affects the quality of services which in turn it can directly or indirectly give an impact on customers (Gupta, 2016). The good experience gained by customers can improve customer satisfaction as customers are increasingly satisfied with the services as they receive a direct impact of the quality of sales relationships. Trust of the salesperson is the main model in fostering a long-term relationship with customers (Drollinger and Comer, 2012). The quality of a good sales relationship accompanied by hard work and intensive interaction with customers has potential to improve the selling performance (Agnihotri et al., 2016).

3.3 Customer orientation

The salesperson performance in marketing activities should be flexible so that it can understand customers' necessity and desire. The main function is to help customers to look for problem solution based on customers' problems. It is one of important issues that has to be understood by sellers. A customer who is satisfied for good services is potential to be involved in selling activities which in turn it can increase the salesperson performance (Homburg et al., 2011; Singh and Das, 2013).

Marketing training joined by the salesperson is able to increase the salesperson's understanding about customers. It can increase the salesperson's work quality. Training activities obtained extend knowledge about sellers and increase interaction intensity quality. Through training seller activities, the salesperson is able to understand customers' necessity and evaluate good and bad customers (Pousa and Mathieu, 2013).

Relationship with customers determines the success of the salesperson' work. This action can be done by giving rewards or gifts to customers on special moments like birthday. This action is able to increase the relationship between the salesperson and the customer (Guenzi et al., 2011; Homburg et al., 2011; Nwamaka and Brian, 2012).

3.4 Salesperson performance

Evaluation of the salesperson performance is part of the main issues in sales management (Spiro and Weits, 1990). To improve the company performance sales, the sales manager should be able to improve sales personnel (Janssens, 1995). Various ways can be done so that the performance of the salesperson increases, such as motivation, incentive, training, and other variety programs (Chaker et al., 2016; Lassk and Shepherd, 2013).

The salesperson performance should be evaluated such as how the behaviours contribute to the achievement of the company objectives (Woo et al., 2011). Piercy et al. (2012) conclude that the salesperson performance is divided into two types, namely behaviour performance and outcomes performance. The behaviour performance focuses on various skills and activities that are essential to meet the responsibilities of a sales job. The behaviours include, such as adaptive selling, teamwork, sales presentation, sales and sales support, planning activity. Performance outcomes consist of the results obtained by the salesperson performance, such as a sales measure, market share, customers' satisfaction and other results achieved.

Ethical behaviour and the ability to build a network of customers are the key factors for success in improving the salesperson performance (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Jaramillo et al., 2015). The salesperson is required to be committed to doing the job, honest, disciplined and responsible with high moral standards to customers to make them satisfied with the services received. With high moral standards, customers can develop a

network (Bolander et al., 2015). Therefore, an extensive customer network improves the performance of the salesperson.

Confidence in the activities of the salesperson can improve the salesperson's performance (Hughes, 2013). The salesperson's ability to master technical knowledge related to work is also an important factor for success. The willingness to improve the skills and abilities is a must for the salesperson if the salesperson does not want to lose in work competition (Monteiro and Vieira, 2016).

3.5 Learning orientation

Learning is a key factor to increase innovation and competitive advantages (Dulger et al., 2016; Hassan et al., 2013). The salesperson's ability to use technology is very important in establishing a good relationship. It must be realised by the salesperson that learning is something mandatory to establish a long-term sales-relationship. Working with an open-minded aspect is also very important. It is needed to be developed to always look for solutions to the problems encountered. In addition, it is necessary to appreciate the original contributions that can be valuable and useful for quality relationships. Discussing on the development of quality relationships, evaluating the work done, and doing improvements are necessary (Capezio et al., 2014).

Every salesperson should be able to understand correctly that a quality relationship should be maintained through a mutual understanding of two sides. The salesperson must have a total commitment to achieve sustainable working relationships. The involvement of the salesperson to participate in determining the direction of future cooperation is expected such as sharing experiences with partners in relation to quality relationships (Vij and Farooq, 2015).

The quality of relationship can increase sales if the salesperson always improves the abilities through learning. Learning activities like learning about the information technology and communication technology can increase the effectiveness of the quality of the relationship, particularly in terms of sales (Dahou et al., 2012; Hassan et al., 2013). Additionally, intelligent salespeople, purchasing power, teamwork and high response can help smooth the process of learning. Learning can lead to creativities and innovations in terms of sales (Pesämaa et al., 2015).

4 Hypothesis

4.1 Adaptive selling and selling relationship quality

The salesperson who can master the technical knowledge about the products being sold and developing good sales planning would increase the quality of sales relationships with customers. Furthermore, the salesperson should explain kindly about design and specifications of products or services to customers. Thus, good sale planning capabilities, such as sales-call, planning and strategy planning sales are interwoven with customer relations (Artur and Cravens, 2002).

The ability to hear the customers' voice will be able to give trust and improve the relationship quality with the customers, which in turn it can increase sales. The salesperson who is able to listen well to customers' complaints and provide problem solutions to the customers can increase business relationships. Therefore, the customers

will recommend the salesperson to their friends that have potential to be new customers. The customers who are satisfied over the services provided by the salesperson, they will feel comfortable and secure as they feel happy to receive attention from the salesperson (Tanya and Comer, 2013). Based on the description above, the proposed hypothesis is:

- H1 The higher the competence of salesperson to adapt to customers, the better the quality of selling relationship with customers.

4.2 Adaptive selling and salesperson performance

The salesperson who can easily adapt to the environment when interacting with the customers improve the salesperson performance (Johlke, 2006; Maroofi et al., 2011). It should be done because each customer has his/her own uniqueness. Each customer has different characteristics. For this reason, the salesperson is required to do many things, for example changing the way or approach used for different customers, using an interesting presentation style, and using material quality presentation.

Many factors determine the successful performance of the salesperson (Monteiro and Vieira, 2016). The salesperson is a key factor and will determine the survival of a business. Improving the skills of the salesperson is one of the key factors and potentials to improve the performance of the salesperson. The salesperson actively improves the quality through training and conferences can improve the salesperson performance (Miao and Evans, 2013). Thus, the proposed hypothesis is:

- H2 The higher the salesperson ability to adapt to the customers, the better the salesperson performance.

4.3 Customer orientation and selling relationship quality

Customer orientation is one of the keys of the successful salesperson performance. Helping customers overcome their difficulties to achieve what they want is a form of attention to customers. If the salesperson can fulfil the customer desires and can give attention to the customer, then the customer will be satisfied. Then, the customers usually make a purchase and willingly invite their friends to switch to a specific product (Nwamaka and Brian, 2012; Pousa and Mathieu, 2013; Singh and Das, 2013).

The success rate of an experienced salesperson will be higher than a salesperson who does not have any experiences at all (Singh and Koshy, 2011). In addition, the salesperson success can also be influenced by the length of the salesperson joined in the company. This means that the longer the salesperson joined the company, more knowledge about the company is gained, then the salesperson can convince the customers well (Pousa and Mathieu, 2014).

Customer orientation can develop the commitment of the salesperson performance. The salesperson can devote energy to the entire mind and has a commitment to do the job. The commitment of the salesperson performance can be seen from the time spent for sales-tasks. The commitment can also be seen from the high improvement, the high involvement in the job and the high work enjoyment (Homburg et al., 2011). Salesperson's success can be determined by the salesperson's ability to understand the customers well. Value is created by considering the value of the service from the customers' perspective (Adel and Wiesner, 2015). The salesperson who has built a good relationship with the company will not easily move to another company. Despite a little

disappointing from the company, the salesperson will still maintain good relationships (Ozdemir and Hewett, 2010). Thus, the proposed hypothesis is:

- H3 The higher the salesperson's ability for customer orientation, the better the selling relationship quality.

4.4 Learning orientation and selling relationship quality

Learning about market orientation can improve the salesperson performance. Learning orientation can be done as there is a strong commitment from the salesperson to improve himself/herself. A strong commitment to learning is one of the keys to competitive advantages. Commitment of learning is an investment for a corporation. It is not a cost component that must be removed by company as it is the best way to maintain the company viability in a long-term (Eris and Ozmen, 2012; Hassan et al., 2013).

The salesperson who has commitment to learn is able to develop innovations that can improve the salesperson performance. Learning orientation can be done through training. Training should be routinely performed. In the training, the salesperson acquires skills that are useful to improve the salesperson performance. Furthermore, most recent knowledge acquired through training can increase confidence and find brilliant ideas as a salesperson performance to improve sales performance (Chughtai and Buckley, 2011; Zaniboni et al., 2011). The roles of trust, commitment and mutual relationship of mutual benefits greatly determine the quality of the relationship (Mandal, 2016). The salesperson's abilities to identify the needs of customers and speed to respond also determine the quality of sales relationship. Based on the description above, the proposed hypothesis is:

- H4 The better the interest of the salesperson in learning, the better the selling relationship quality.

4.5 Customer orientation and salesperson performance

The salesperson should always actively follow the latest technological developments and improve his/her mastery over technology. In addition, the salesperson orientation on the customers can undertake following activities: evaluating what makes consumers satisfied, trying to understand what the customer needs, evaluating periodically about customer satisfaction, and serving customers wholeheartedly. Customers who are satisfied with the services, they are potential to make a purchase that can improve salesperson performance (Hakala and Kohtamaki, 2010; Pettijohn et al., 2010).

Customer orientation can work well when it develops systematic personnel empowerment, attention to the service quality in the company, and the salesperson performance necessity and satisfaction. The empowerment of employees can be conducted, such as by giving freedom in creating their work, and give the salesperson performance judgment over the problems he/she solves. Other things noted to the increase of the customers orientation are the clarity information and coordination of the work, performance and comfort in working, and variations in the running tasks (Anosike and Eid, 2011; Guenzi et al., 2011).

The orientation of functional and relational customers can improve salesperson performance through customers' loyalty. The functional orientation of the customers can

be done, such as knowing the needs of specific customer requirements. The salesperson performance should be able to actively involve customers to determine their necessity, and explain clearly about the product usability and safety of using the products or services purchased. The customers relationship orientation can be done by building good relations with customers, showing interest to customers in the sales conversation, and showing similarities found with various interests, such as customer experience (Homburg et al., 2012; Singh and Koshy, 2011).

The salesperson performance can be influenced by the adaptive interaction involvement in sales, for example: listening to what is said by the customer, having a very clear role in conversations, and listening well when customers report the complaint. In addition, the salesperson needs a unique approach to each customer as each customer has different characteristics from one another. The salesperson should be able to change the approach used when it could not be understood by the customers (Boorom et al., 1998). Based on the explanation above, the proposed hypothesis is:

H5 The better the customer orientation, the better the salesperson performance.

4.6 Selling relationship quality and salesperson performance

Salesperson performance oriented to customers can improve sales relationship quality which in turn it can improve the salesperson performance. Several ways can be done to improve sales relationships quality with customers, such as showing high attention to customers by showing the same things with its customers like hobbies, favourite foods, and interests (Anosike and Eid, 2011; Homburg et al., 2011; Paolo Guenzi, 2010). The good sales relationships quality with customers can be enhanced by hard work and considering constraints faced in sales as challenges to be faced but not to be avoided. In addition, the salesperson needs to always improve sales skills through training within and outside the company (Derek, 2014).

The salesperson performance can be determined by the behaviour of the salesperson performance and loyalty. Each salesperson is obligated to maintain the company's image and apply the values already agreed in the organisation. An example of the loyalty is a concern for the future company and willingness to share experiences to new friends in order to achieve the salesperson performance (Asiedu et al., 2014; Shannahan et al., 2013; Yao et al., 2013).

The salesperson's ability to constantly learn tends to increase the salesperson performance (Spillecke and Brettel, 2014). Self-efficacy can be enhanced through: reading relevant books or magazines, gaining knowledge from the experience of peers. The salesperson spends a lot of time to learn new approaches to understand in detail the customer code (Dulger et al., 2014). It is important for the salesperson to learn something new about the sales. Sales tend to increase if the salesperson always increases the salesperson's skills. In addition, factors of communication, precision and accuracy of the service, the advantages of resources, and the ability to formulate competitive strategy determine the success of the salesperson performance (Abdul-Hafez and Al-Nady, 2016; Gomes et al., 2016).

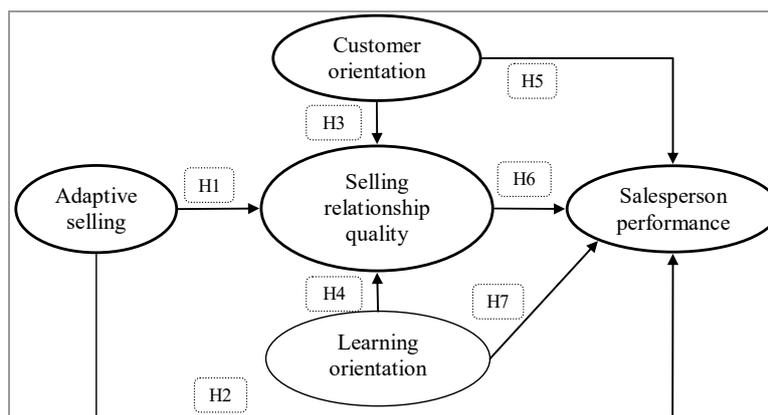
Strategies to improve the salesperson performance depend on factors emerging from outside of the company and within the vendors such how competitors and customers utilise information (Lonial and Carter, 2015). Information from competitors can be gained by studying the success of the competitors. Moreover, the information about

consumers can also help to solve the problems faced (Dursun, 2015). Other factors can be done partly by involving experts and skilled workers in research and development, allocating significant amount of budget in research section and department, studying and evaluating past failures. Therefore, the proposed hypotheses are:

- H6 The better the selling relationship quality, the better the performance of the salesperson.
- H7 The better salesperson's learning orientation, the better the salesperson performance.

Research has summarised the concepts of the adaptive selling, the selling relationship quality and the salesperson performance. Although many authors have studied factors that affect the salesperson performance, this study proposes a new concept of the selling relationship quality. The new concept emerges as a logical consequence of market that is complex and dynamic. With this new concept of the selling relationship quality, it is believed to be potential for scaling up of the salesperson performance. The research framework and hypotheses proposed are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Research framework



5 Research methodology

5.1 Data collection

The data were collected using a questionnaire survey from salesperson performance (pharmacy) located in Yogyakarta Indonesia. This salesperson performance was drawn from several pharmaceutical companies whose factories or branches are in Yogyakarta. The respondents were taken randomly. The respondents were given a detailed questionnaire with respondents' interest and consciousness. They voluntarily completed the questionnaires. The researchers distributed 350 questionnaires to pharmaceutical salespersons. However, after screening and trimming the data, there were 259 questionnaires (75%) analysed by the researchers. The data were collected from June to August 2015. The respondent average age was 25 years old. Their average working

experience in sales was 5.2 years. The educational level of respondents ranged from high school up to diploma and bachelor's degree.

5.2 *Measurement*

We used a small sample for pre-test. The purpose of the pre-test was to improve invalid indicators. Non-response bias was used to see the respondent characteristics that completed the questionnaire between timely and not timely in completing a detailed questionnaire. Non-response test was performed by using t-test independent sample. A significant difference between the variances of populations into two samples can be seen at the Levene's test for equality of variance. In this study, there are no significant differences. All variables are valid and feasible. A ten-point scale ranging starts from Likert scale (1) strongly disagree to (10) strongly agree, used for all the indicator variables. Alpha Cronbach values for all measurements are in the range of 0.77–0.80. This may indicate high level of reliability.

6 **Results**

6.1 *Validity and reliability*

The instrument is argued to have a high validity degree if it is able to measure what is supposed to be measured. The low and high value of the instrument validity indicates the extent to which the questionnaire is able to collect the variables data measured. The validity test used in the analysis factor is loading factor used to determine the grouping of each variable. Significant criteria of the loading factor are as follows: smaller than 0.3 is significant, smaller than 0.4 is more significant and minimum of 0.5 is very significant. Additionally, an indicator can be used as a tool to measure a variable if it has a loading factor of at least 0.5 (Hair et al., 2010).

The reliability test is intended to test consistency of instrument. Consistency can be seen from the results of the consistency or data obtained from the respondents in two different places or different respondents of two groups. Additionally, an indicator can be said to be reliable when the Cronbach alpha value is at least 0.6 (Nunnally, 1967). For exploratory research, the coefficient which is below 0.6 is still acceptable as there are empirical reasons that can be accepted (Ferdinand, 2014). The reliability can also be measured from the variance extracted. The extracted variance is the number of indicators that are summarised by the latent variables examined. The value of the extracted variance is acceptable > 0.5 . The higher the value of the extracted variance indicates that such indicators are representative. Furthermore, all indicators of the present study are valid and reliable. The reliability results of the Cronbach alpha value of all the variables are above 0.6 can be found in Table 1.

6.2 *Confirmatory factor analysis and construct validity*

The researchers conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to obtain an accurate measurement before estimating the structural model (Hair et al., 2010). Indicators that have loading factors below 0.50 were dropped. The statistical models are declared fit and can be accepted with the value of $\chi^2 = 115.309$; $df = 109$; $p < 0.322$; $RMSEA = 0.016$;

CFI = 0.996; AGFI = 0.936; GFI = 0.954; NFI = 0.927. While the overall χ^2 is significant, the χ^2/df ratio is 1.058. Then, the researchers assessed convergent and discriminant validity. The convergent and internal validity actually measure constructs that should theoretically be measured. This is achieved through an analysis of the reliability. Each construct has a Cronbach alpha above 0.75 (Hair et al., 2010). The whole construct with the loading factor, the composite reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) are presented in Table 1.

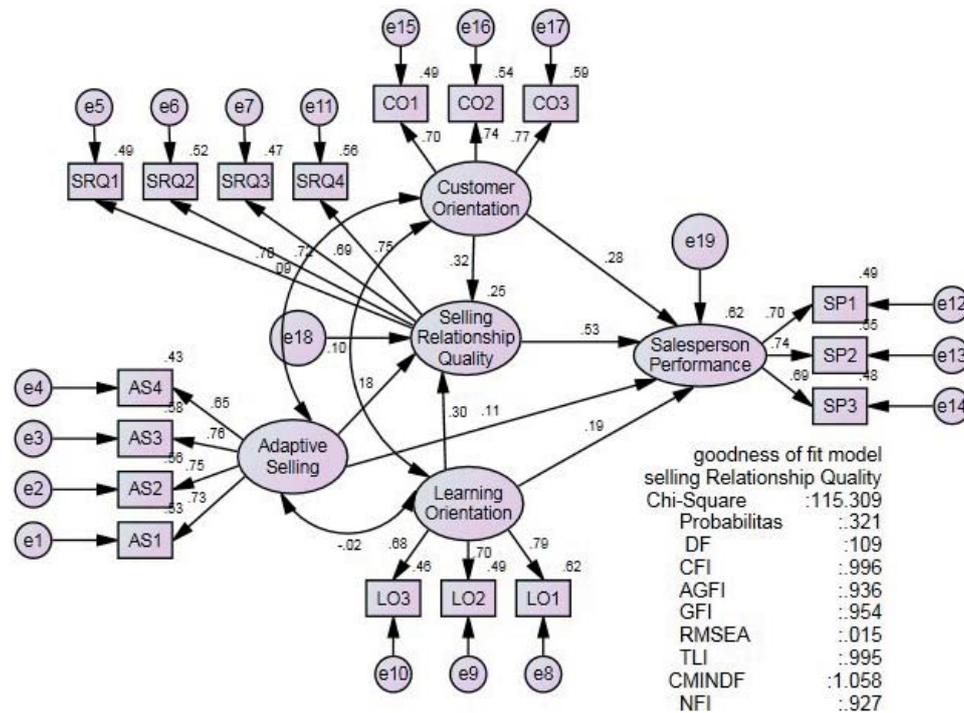
Table 1 Scale item with loading factor, CR and AVE

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Standardised loadings</i>
<i>Adaptive selling</i> (Chena and Jaramillo, 2014; Maroofi et al., 2011) AVE = 0.526; composite reliability = 0.816	
When I feel my approach does not work, then I can easily change with other approaches.	0.728
I use different approaches for different customers.	0.751
I can easily solve customers' problems.	0.762
I can easily understand customer behaviour.	0.655
<i>Selling relationship quality</i> (Agnihotri et al., 2016; Park et al., 2014) AVE = 0.514; composite reliability = 0.834	
I always think about the long-term benefits for customers who buy my products.	0.700
I think that the time customers spend a long-term investment.	0.721
I am interested to maintain long-term sales relationships.	0.786
I easily develop long-term relationships with customers.	0.750
I always expanding network of customers through recommendations from friends.	
<i>Salesperson performance</i> (Abed and Haghighi, 2009; Schwepker and Schultz, 2015) AVE = 0.501; composite reliability = 0.750	
I always generate higher levels of sales, when compared with my colleagues.	0.698
I have always exceeded the sales targets set by the company.	0.740
I have always been able to increase company profit.	0.692
<i>Customer orientation</i> (Pousa and Mathieu, 2014), AVE = 0.561; composite reliability = 0.793	
I emphasise the significance for consumer satisfaction.	0.698
I emphasise the significance of customer needs.	0.736
I am a good listener for the customer	0.766
<i>Learning orientation</i> (Dulger et al., 2016; Hassan et al., 2013) AVE = 0.629; composite reliability = 0.829	
Learning is one of the essential keys to achieve a competitive advantage.	0.96
It's important to work with an open mind, ready to develop alternative solutions.	0.92
I have a total commitment to achieve the goals.	0.94

6.3 Parameter value estimation

Figure 2 shows that the adaptive selling has a significant positive effect on the salesperson performance through selling relationship quality. Furthermore, the adaptive selling, the customer orientation and the learning orientation have a significant positive effect on the selling relationship quality and the salesperson performance. Thus, the role of the variable of the selling relationship quality is a key factor to improve the salesperson performance.

Figure 2 Structural equation model analysis (see online version for colours)



6.4 Hypothesis testing

The hypothesis testing can be seen from the results of the standardised coefficient regression. The estimation results are presented in Table 2:

The adaptive selling has a significant positive effect on the selling relationship quality with the standardised coefficient of 0.182 and the probability value is 0.011 (Hypothesis-1). The adaptive selling does not have an effect on the salesperson performance with the standardised coefficient of 0.109 and the probability value of 0.091 (Hypothesis-2). The customer orientation has a significant positive effect on the selling relationship quality with the standardised coefficient of 0.318 and the probability value is 0.000 (Hypothesis-3). The learning orientation has a significant positive effect on the selling relationship quality with the standardised coefficient of 0.296 and the probability value is 0.000 (Hypothesis-4). The customer orientation has a significant positive effect on the salesperson performance with the standardised coefficient of 0.227 and the

probability value is 0.000 (Hypothesis-5). The selling relationship quality has a positive significant effect on the salesperson performance with the standardised coefficient of 0.531 and the probability value is 0.008 (Hypothesis-6). The learning orientation has a significant positive effect on the salesperson performance with the standardised coefficient of 0.187 and the probability value is 0.008 (Hypothesis-7).

Table 2 Standardised regression weights: (group number 1 – default mode)

	<i>Path</i>		β	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Comment</i>
H1	Selling relationship quality ← Adaptive selling		0.182	0.01*	Accepted
H2	Salesperson performance ← Adaptive selling		0.109	0.09	Rejected
H3	Selling relationship quality ← Customer orientation		0.318	***	Accepted
H4	Selling relationship quality ← Learning orientation		0.296	***	Accepted
H5	Salesperson performance ← Customer orientation		0.227	***	Accepted
H6	Salesperson performance ← Selling relationship quality		0.531	***	Accepted
H7	Salesperson performance ← Learning orientation		0.187	0.01*	Accepted

Notes: $N = 259$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

6.5 Testing a mediating role: selling relationship quality

The aim of the testing mediating role is to test the importance of the role of the variable of selling relationship quality to overcome the gap between the adaptive selling and the salesperson performance. This test determines the effect of mediation on structural equation modelling ('Sobelt test', 1982). Based on the model of the study, it is obtained the values of the Sobelt test statistic and probability as follows: the first path of the value of the Sobel test statistic is 3.376 and the probability is 0.009. The second path of the value of the Sobel test statistic is 3.600 and the probability is 0.000. The third path value of the Sobel test statistic is 3.142 and the probability is 0.000. The results of the analysis indicate that the importance of the role of the variable selling relationship quality as a mediating variable to bridge the gap between the adaptive selling and the salesperson performance. Thus, it can be stated that the role of the variable selling relationship quality is very important to improve the salesperson performance.

7 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the adaptive sales have positive and significant effect on the selling relationship quality. The results of this study are similar to previous studies (Parka and Deitzb, 2006). The adaptive selling is one of marketing ways to adapt to customers' necessity and confidence specifically (Spiro and Weits, 1990). Salesperson who can adjust to the environment can improve the quality of sales relationships. Adaptive sales can be done by using a different approach for different customers, presenting the material well, providing solutions to the problems faced by customers, easily adapting to various types of customers, and being able to understand customer behaviour. Adaptive behaviour of the salesperson makes customers increase their satisfaction and trust. In the literature review, trust and satisfaction are the dimensions of relationship quality (Giacobbe et al., 2006; Wilson and Hunt, 2011). Customers who are

satisfied with the services provided by a salesperson, will tend to continue to do business in a relatively long period (Choi and Kim, 2013; Drollinger and Comer, 2012). Results of research undertaken by Singh and Das (2013) also agree that the adaptive selling behaviour can improve the salesperson performance significantly.

The adaptive selling does not have significant effect on the salesperson performance. The empirical test results show that the more adaptive the salesperson in carrying out the work, the salesperson performance is rejected. It can be interpreted that the salesperson relying on the adaptive selling does not have a significantly affect on the salesperson performance. Empirical evidence reported by Keillor and Parker (2000) suggest that the adaptive selling does not affect the salesperson performance. There are several possible reasons why the adaptive selling is unable to influence. For a salesperson who has considerable international experience, the success rate will be higher compared with the salesperson who has no experience at all (Gupta, 2016). Besides the experience factor, the successful performance of the salesperson can also be affected by the length of the salesperson to join the company which means that the longer a salesperson has been with the company, the more knowledge about the company is gained, and the salesperson can convince more customers (Pousa and Mathieu, 2014).

In this research, the customer orientation is able to increase the selling relationship quality. The results of this study show that the customer orientation plays as a major contributor to the relationship between seller and the buyer. The results of this study are in line with previous studies (Mullins et al., 2014). The customer orientation puts the customer as the main focus for the salesperson. The customer orientation will make consumers understand the needs of the consumers. The fit between consumer needs and what has been done by the seller will have an impact on interpersonal satisfaction (Goad and Jaramillo, 2014). Other studies explain that the customer orientation has effect on satisfaction (Chow, 2015). The salesperson oriented to customers can improve the quality of the sales relationships and the salesperson performance. Several ways can be done by the salesperson to improve the quality of the relationship of their sales with customers, such as showing high attention to the customers as a sales conversation, showing the same thing to customers such as hobbies and food (Anosike and Eid, 2011).

This study shows the learning orientation has positive influence on the selling relationship quality significantly. The results of this study are in line with previous research (Vij and Farooq, 2015). The learning orientation refers to the organisational activity creating and using knowledge to enhance competitive advantages (Yalcinkaya et al., 2007). Knowledge of the customer makes the salesperson more superior than others. Some experts explain that companies with strong learning orientation will affect the acquisition of information, information dissemination, and share (Pesämaa et al., 2015). The salesperson can learn to master the technical knowledge of the product sold, make sales planning properly, and boost the quality of its sales relationships with customers. Therefore, the salesperson who can explain well about the design and specifications and functions of the product or services can satisfy the customers. Satisfied customers tend to make purchasing decisions. Furthermore, having good sales planning capabilities such as planning sales call and strategic sales planning, is very useful to assist the salesperson to have better relationship with customers (Artur and Cravens, 2002; Moberg and Leasher, 2011). The more the salesperson learns about the customers, the more they know how to build relationships and how to satisfy the customers.

This result shows the learning orientation has a positive influence on the salesperson performance significantly. It is the most influential variable on the salesperson

performance after the variables of customer orientation and adaptive selling. The salesperson who always has the learning orientation is an investment for the company and can maintain the life cycle of the company in a relatively long time (Eris and Ozmen, 2012). The more the salesperson has orientation to learning, the more effective the salesperson performance (Hall et al., 2015). The salesperson will learn about the knowledge, skills, and different techniques to satisfy customers. The increase of the salesperson's techniques and skills will ultimately have an impact on the salesperson performance (Paparoidamis, 2005).

This result shows that the selling relationship quality has a positive significant effect on the salesperson performance. The result of this study is in line with previous studies (Parka and Deitzb, 2006). Hennig-Thurau (2004) that argue that the concept of the selling relationship quality as metaconstruct consists of several components that reflect the overall nature of the relationship between companies and customers. The salesperson who has good relationship with the company, the salesperson will not easily move to another company, because the salesperson is already loyal to the place where she/he works. Although there is a slight disappointment from the company, she/he will maintain his/her good relationship (Ozdemir and Hewett, 2010). Rapp et al. (2008) explain that the quality of relationships built is expected to make a long-term relationship between the seller and the buyer exist. The long-term relationship creates sustainable loyalty that will affect the company's performance.

The customer orientation is able to improve the performance of the salesperson. This result is in line with previous studies explaining that the customer orientation is able to improve the salesperson performance (Boles et al., 2000). Cross and Brashear (2007) also found that the customer orientation can impact directly or indirectly on performance. The customer orientation is one key to the success of the salesperson performance. Helping customers of the difficulties is an example of attention to the customers. If the salesperson can meet the customers and can give attention to the customers, then they will be satisfied and they will usually make repeated purchases and will voluntarily ask their friends to move to a specific product offered (Nwamaka and Brian, 2012).

In this study, the selling relationship quality is able to become an intervening variable between the adaptive selling and the salesperson performance. The result of this study indicates that the adaptive selling does not have a significant effect on the performance of the salesperson. In the pharmaceutical industry, the adaptive selling does not directly affect on the salesperson performance. To affect sales, the salesperson with the adaptive behaviour must be able to affect the relationship between the salesperson and the customers. Once the relationship between the salesperson and the customers is close, it will be able to have an impact on the performance. The salesperson must focus on maintaining the selling relationship quality in order to be able to improve the salesperson performance.

8 Conclusions

This study analyses the effect of the adaptive selling, the customer orientation, the learning orientation of the salesperson performance on selling relationship quality as the intervening variable. Based on the results of the hypotheses tests, this study concludes that the adaptive selling gives a significant positive effect on the selling relationship

quality. However, it does not have an effect on the salesperson performance. The customer orientation gives a significant positive effect on the selling relationship quality so that it improves the salesperson performance. The learning orientation has a significant positive effect on the selling relationship quality so that it improves the salesperson performance. Thus, the emergence of the new concept of the selling relationship quality is important variable to improve the salesperson performance.

9 Theoretical contribution

The theoretical implication of the study is that the selling relationship quality has an important role in the adaptive selling behaviour and the salesperson performance. The selling relationship quality becomes a major central sale of the adaptive behaviour and the salesperson performance. The adaptive selling behaviour should be able to increase the selling relationship quality. Therefore, there is a need to establish a good relationship between the salesperson and the buyers so that the salesperson performance will also increase. Additionally, the salesperson with more experiences in marketing can not be guaranteed to reach the salesperson performance successfully (Boles et al., 2000). To be a successful salesperson, there are many variables involving, such as marketing skills, personal skills, technical skills, and salesmanship skills (Basir et al., 2010; Bell et al., 2010).

10 Implications of the study

Based on the results above, there are several managerial implications. First, improving customer orientation. The customer orientation can work well if it is supported by systematic salesperson empowerment, attention to quality of service within the company itself and the needs and satisfaction of the salesperson. Employee empowerment can be done partly by providing freedom to be creative in the work, leaving the salesperson to judge for himself/herself on the problems he/she solves. Another thing that should be noted in relation to improving the customer orientation is the clarity of information and coordination of work, performance and comfort in the work as well as variations in the line of duty. Secondly, improving adaptive selling behaviour. The salesperson performance can be affected by the involvement of adaptive interaction through salesperson involvement in interaction, such as listening carefully to what is said by the customer, having a clear role in the conversation and listening well when customers submit complaints. Third, improving customer orientation. Every customer has different characteristics. A salesperson should be able to change the approach used when the approach used cannot be understood by the customers. Fourth, improving selling relationship quality. The salesperson must strive to improve relationships with customers. This can be done by building relationships with customers, showing serious interest to customers in a sales conversation, and showing similarities with customers such as hobbies.

11 Limitations and direction for future research

The model of the constancy examination presented in this research is not marked as the best model so that the ability to explain the relationship between variables is low. Additionally, selling relationship quality indicators need to be added so that the ability to explain the variables becomes better. This present study only involved a limited number of responses. Further studies can also be conducted in service industries, such as organisations, insurance, hospitals, banks, and supermarkets, to ensure the important role of the new variable of the selling relationship quality on the proposed model. This study can also be done in other provinces in Indonesia and other countries by applying the proposed model so that the research can gain a more extensive coverage.

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