
STRUCTURING ADAPTIVE SELLING DECISIONS: A TCM-ADO-BASED SYSTEMATIC REVIEW AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SPIDER FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Adaptive Selling Behavior (ASB) has been shown to enhance sales performance significantly; however, the decision-making processes of salespeople need to be more structured in the existing literature. To address this, a systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted, utilizing the Theories, Contexts, and Methods (TCM) as well as the Antecedents, Decisions, and Outcomes (ADO) frameworks, analyzing 41 articles published between 2004 and 2024. The study introduces the SPIDER framework—comprising Strategic Responsiveness, Persuasive Influence, Independent Decision-Making, Dynamic Adaptability, Empathic Understanding, and Resilient Flexibility—as a critical contribution to organizing and measuring decision-making in ASB. This framework bridges theoretical constructs with practical applications, offering clear, measurable guidance for enhancing adaptive strategies in sales. Furthermore, it highlights critical gaps in the literature, particularly regarding the interplay of SPIDER's dimensions and its application in various industrial and cultural contexts. The study outlines a future research agenda focused on validating the SPIDER framework and exploring its potential as a practical tool for developing adaptive sales strategies.

Keywords: Adaptive Selling Behavior, TCM ADO Frameworks, Systematic Literature Review, SPIDER Framework, Salesperson Adaptation

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the sales landscape has experienced substantial transformation due to the evolving nature of customer behavior and the variety of needs and preferences. These changes introduce new challenges in a complex sales environment, where salespeople function not only as product providers but also as consultants and information liaisons. This role necessitates a comprehensive understanding of customer needs and the ability to deliver solutions that meet customer expectations (Sharma et al., 2024). Adaptive sales strategies are essential to address these challenges. Compared to traditional communication methods, adaptive sales strategies enable salespeople to develop personalized messages that align with customer characteristics and varying sales conditions (Amenuvor et al., 2022a). Within business-to-business (B2B) interactions, social media is a strategic instrument for sales professionals to acquire competitive intelligence and enhance responsiveness to customer requirements (Itani et al., 2017).

Adaptive Selling Behavior (ASB) is increasingly significant across diverse sales contexts and has emerged as a critical area of research in contemporary marketing (McFarland, 2019). In an omni-channel context, (Yurova et al., 2017) identify two primary dimensions of ASB: non-interactive and interactive adaptations. These dimensions exert varying effects based on the product type (utilitarian or hedonic) and the customer's perceived level of control. These dimensions enhance the comprehension of how salespeople can effectively customize their strategies in a complex sales environment.

Moreover, new studies indicate that sales personnel's ambidexterity, precisely their capacity to reconcile sales and service objectives, can promote adaptive sales behavior. Nevertheless, ambidexterity may exacerbate role conflict experienced by sales personnel, particularly in escalating customer demands (Agnihotri et al., 2017). Conversely, self-leadership strategies, including thought self-leadership (TSL), have demonstrated usefulness in fostering adaptive sales behaviors by enhancing salespeople's self-efficacy and sales skills (Singh et al., 2017) Despite acknowledging Adaptive Selling as a crucial idea, its practical use in the field necessitates a more profound and systematic comprehension.

Various prior studies have elucidated the essential elements of adaptive selling, including variations in sales approaches (Amenuvor et al., 2022a; Majeed et al., 2023; McFarland, 2019), their impact on sales performance (Charoensukmongkol & Suthatorn, 2021; Kuo et al., 2023; Kwak et al., 2019; Yoo & Arnold, 2019), as well as the factors that mediate and moderate its efficacy (Altintas et al., 2017; Limbu et al., 2016; R.M et al., 2019). Nonetheless, comprehension of the concrete operationalization of adaptive selling in sales force behavior needs to be improved, resulting in a disparity between theory and practice.

This research reviews 41 articles, indicating that adaptive selling is the primary emphasis in direct (face-to-face) selling and intricate scenarios necessitating significant flexibility. The data indicates that 20 journals focus on face-to-face selling, while 17 address the omni-channel context. This fact underscores that despite the evolving landscape of sales, the significance of adaptive selling persists, particularly as a salesperson's fundamental capacity to adjust to diverse customer requirements. Nonetheless, the primary inquiry persists: How can this concept be converted into tangible, quantifiable, and systemically executable behavior?

To address this gap, this research uses the Theories, Contexts, and Methods (TCM) and Antecedents, Decisions, and Outcomes (ADO) frameworks to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) on the topic of adaptive selling. Furthermore, this research introduces the SPIDER framework (Strategic Responsiveness, Persuasive Influence, Independent Decision-Making, Dynamic Adaptability, Empathic Understanding, and Resilient Flexibility). SPIDER provides a new way to understand and measure adaptive selling behavior (ASB) in the form of actual behavior, thereby helping salespeople understand the importance of adaptation and apply it operationally.

This research provides several significant contributions. First, this research integrates previous findings to construct a comprehensive picture of adaptive selling, highlights the limitations of existing research, and provides recommendations for future studies. Second, by adopting a TCM and ADO approach, this review provides a research roadmap and fills the gap in the literature on concrete implementation of sales adaptation. Third, SPIDER findings offer a practical approach for salespeople to identify and develop measurable adaptive behaviors, thereby contributing to developing more effective sales strategies.

This paper is structured as follows. Section 2 establishes the study question, technique, and sample employed, encompassing specifics regarding search keywords, limitations, time range, and pertinent papers. Section 3 explores the ADO architecture to address the initial

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research topic. Section 4 presents the TCM framework to address the second research issue. Section 5 covers the third research topic by presenting the SPIDER findings and suggesting further research hypotheses. Section 6 delineates the academic consequences, whereas Section 7 articulates the results and limits of this study.

RESEARCH METHODS

A systematic review is a precise and transparent research methodology that identifies, selects, analyses, and synthesizes existing papers on a particular subject. This methodology reduces bias in the literature search, facilitates precise and reliable results, and aids in identifying gaps for future studies (Fan, 2022; Paul & Criado, 2020; Shahrzad Yaghtin, 2021). The primary classifications of systematic literature review publications include domain-based, method-based, theory-based reviews, and meta-analyses (Paul & Criado, 2020). Domain-based reviews can be categorized into several classifications: framework-based reviews (Paul & Benito, 2018); structured reviews, which emphasize commonly utilized theories, methods, and constructs (Paul & Feliciano-Cestero, 2021); bibliometric reviews, employing statistical techniques to evaluate extensive collections of published studies based on criteria such as citations, authors, journals, countries, theories, and methods (Randhawa et al., 2016); hybrid reviews, which amalgamate multiple review types (Paul et al., 2017); and reviews aimed at proposing new hypotheses, theories, and propositions (Lim et al., 2021)

This study employs a framework-based overview to address our research questions, which will be provided in the subsequent part. This review entails either the utilization of an established framework, like TCM, or the creation of a novel framework for organizing the review (Paul & Criado, 2020). We selected a framework-based review due to its capacity to provide a systematic and robust structure that integrates prior research findings, hence facilitating the identification of literature gaps for future investigation (Paul & Criado, 2020). This research employs the ADO and TCM framework to examine the literature on adaptive selling, defined by (Weitz et al., 1986) as a salesperson's ability to adjust their sales strategy according to customers' diverse demands

Adaptive sales are critical to salesperson success (McFarland, 2019; Singh et al., 2017). This approach is acknowledged as a distinctive instrument in the sales funnel, owing to its flexibility, enables salespeople to customize their strategies to meet varied consumer requirements. In contrast to other channels that provide generic product information, adaptive

selling improves personalization by facilitating customized strategies for various consumer contexts (Itani et al., 2017; Yurova et al., 2017). Recent research highlights the significance of cultural intelligence (Charoensukmongkol, 2020) and emotion regulation (Kuo et al., 2023) in enhancing the effectiveness of adaptive selling. Previous investigations (Kwak et al., 2019; Yoo & Arnold, 2019) have brought considerable attention to this notion.

We adhered to the methodology proposed by (Shahrzad Yaghtin, 2021) for our literature review. At first, we formulated the research questions that would direct the comprehensive evaluation procedure. Second, we performed an exhaustive search to identify pertinent studies for inclusion in the review. Third, we chose the final sample from the studies according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. We rigorously retrieved data from the studies in our final sample, encompassing pertinent findings on adaptive marketing and the factors affecting its implementation across diverse industries and marketplaces.

1. RESEARCH QUESTION

An effective systematic literature review requires formulating explicit research questions before conducting subsequent analytical processes (Shahrzad Yaghtin, 2021). This study incorporated and amended the research questions suggested by (Lim et al., 2021), considering the TCM and ADO frameworks and the necessity to reconcile theory with experience. This research topic aims to create a thorough understanding of adaptive marketing and offer a strategic contribution to advancing this concept. The inquiries posed in the research are:

RQ 1. What is known about adaptive selling, including the antecedents, decisions, and outcomes that affect its execution?

This inquiry seeks to identify and consolidate the principal results in the literature concerning adaptive selling. The objective is to elucidate the antecedents, decision-making processes, and outcomes that facilitate the practical application of adaptive selling while also identifying under-researched areas.

RQ2. How has adaptive selling been researched in various theoretical contexts, research methods, and industry environments, and what are its limitations?

This question evaluates the theoretical approaches, research contexts, and methods used to study adaptive selling. In addition, it seeks to identify the diversity of approaches and limitations that may affect the generalizability of results in various sales situations.

RQ3. How can adaptive selling be translated into real, measurable behavior, and how can the SPIDER framework address this gap?

This question focuses on operationalizing adaptive selling behavior (ASB) as actual behavior that can be measured. This research not only identifies challenges in implementing the adaptation concept but also introduces the SPIDER framework (Strategic Responsiveness, Persuasive Influence, Independent Decision-Making, Dynamic Adaptability, Empathic Understanding, and Resilient Flexibility) as a solution to address the gap between theory and practice. This RQ also leads to the development of a future research agenda.

2. ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK

This systematic review's organizational approach facilitates the integration of critical components from diverse literature on adaptive selling. This framework is particularly crucial in systematic literature reviews, differentiating them from conventional reviews by methodically organizing material. This organization facilitates readers' access to precise details and clarifies the location of pertinent information. This review integrates the ADO and TCM frameworks to analyze the adaptive selling literature comprehensively.

The ADO framework, created by (Paul & Benito, 2018), disaggregates research into three primary components: antecedents, decisions, and outcomes. Antecedents are the elements that influence a specific behavior; Decisions are the activities executed about that behavior; and Outcomes are the results of the behavior, which ascertain its success or failure. Conversely, the TCM framework proposed by (Paul et al., 2017) systematically structures the underpinnings of extant research, encompassing theories, contexts, and methods. Theory denotes the framework researchers employ in examining adaptive selling. Context pertains to the conditions or environment relevant to the study, and Methods outline the structured procedure for gathering and analyzing empirical data (Figure 1).

3. PROCEDURE

The selection of pertinent publications adhered to a meticulous and systematic methodology to guarantee research integrity and transparency. The PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) procedure was implemented to ensure the transparency and reliability of the review. PRISMA delineates the article selection process into four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, each elaborated upon as follows.

4. IDENTIFICATION

The identification phase entails the preliminary collection of publications utilizing pertinent keywords such as "Adaptive Selling," "Adaptive Selling Theory," "Adaptive Selling Behavior," and "Adaptive Selling Model." The investigation spanned 20 years, from 2004 to 2024, resulting in 2,448 papers. Only journal papers were included to ensure quality, excluding book chapters, conference proceedings, and other sources. The search concentrated on pertinent and esteemed journals, including ABAC Journal, Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, Cogent Business & Management, EuroMed Journal of Business, Industrial Marketing Management, International Journal of Bank Marketing, Journal of African Business, Journal of Applied Social Psychology, Journal of Asia Business Studies, Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies, Journal of Global Marketing, Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, Journal of Productivity and Performance Management, Marketing Intelligence & Planning, Psychology & Marketing, and Sustainability.

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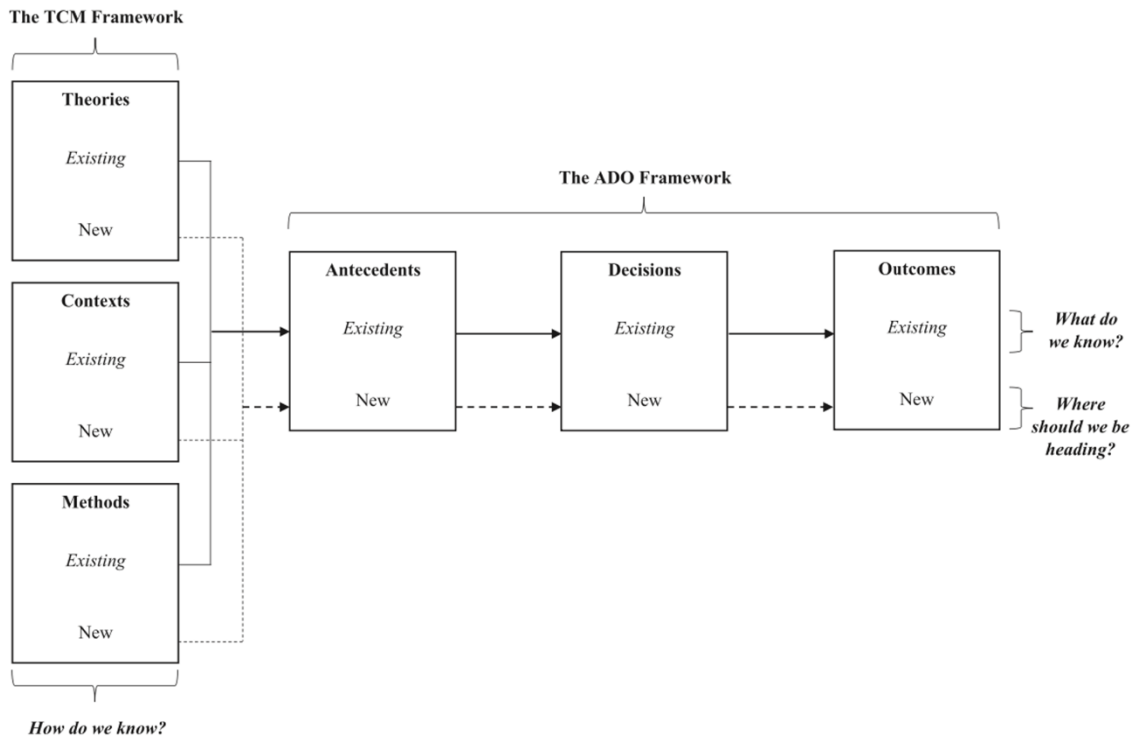


Figure 1. An integrated ADO-TCM framework (Lim et al., 2021)

5. SCREENING

At this step, we refined the search results by implementing additional filters to pick only articles indexed by Scopus and categorized as Q1 and Q2. This filter guarantees the inclusion of only superior items. This filtration decreased the article count from 2,448 to 118 documents. The pertinence of papers was assessed through their titles and abstracts to confirm alignment with the objectives of this study. This procedure yielded 41 articles that satisfied the established relevance and quality standards.

6. ELIGIBILITY

During the eligibility phase, papers underwent additional assessment to confirm the inclusion of only empirical studies. Conceptual studies and reviews lacking empirical data were removed to preserve the integrity of the data-driven approach. Articles not in English and those that were inaccessible were also excluded.

INCLUSION

The screened papers were re-evaluated during the inclusion phase to confirm their completeness and validity. This phase guarantees that every article satisfies the requirements for content analysis in this systematic review. A total of 41 papers were selected for subsequent examination in this evaluation (Figure 2).

1. WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Researchers have thoroughly investigated Adaptive Selling across numerous industries, including retail, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, banking, cosmetics, export, insurance, and others. These studies encompass diverse client categories (B2B, B2C) and many sales channels (digital, face-to-face, and omnichannel) across various nations, including the United States, South Korea, Indonesia, Italy, and others. These studies employed several methodologies, including participants such as sales personnel, customers, sales managers, and students.

(Alavi et al., 2019) asserted that future research must conceptualize and evaluate adaptive sales techniques that are infrequently executed yet significantly contribute to enhancing sales success. (Kimura et al., 2019) suggested that subsequent research adopt intraorganizational skills into research models to elucidate their impact on adaptive selling efficacy.

A comprehensive examination of 41 scientific articles per the researchers' suggestions has yielded substantial discoveries that may benefit both practitioners and academics. These insights provide practitioners with direction on the elements influencing adaptive sales behavior and its effects, enhancing sales effectiveness and client loyalty while also contributing to salesperson burnout. Simultaneously, these findings allow scholars to investigate study deficiencies in Adaptive Selling.

This section of the article will examine the components of antecedents, decisions, and outcomes (ADO) within the framework of Adaptive Selling. This analysis seeks to assess the antecedent elements that affect adaptive behavior, the decisions made based on these factors, and the consequent outcomes to provide a thorough grasp of the dynamics and ramifications of executing an Adaptive Selling plan.

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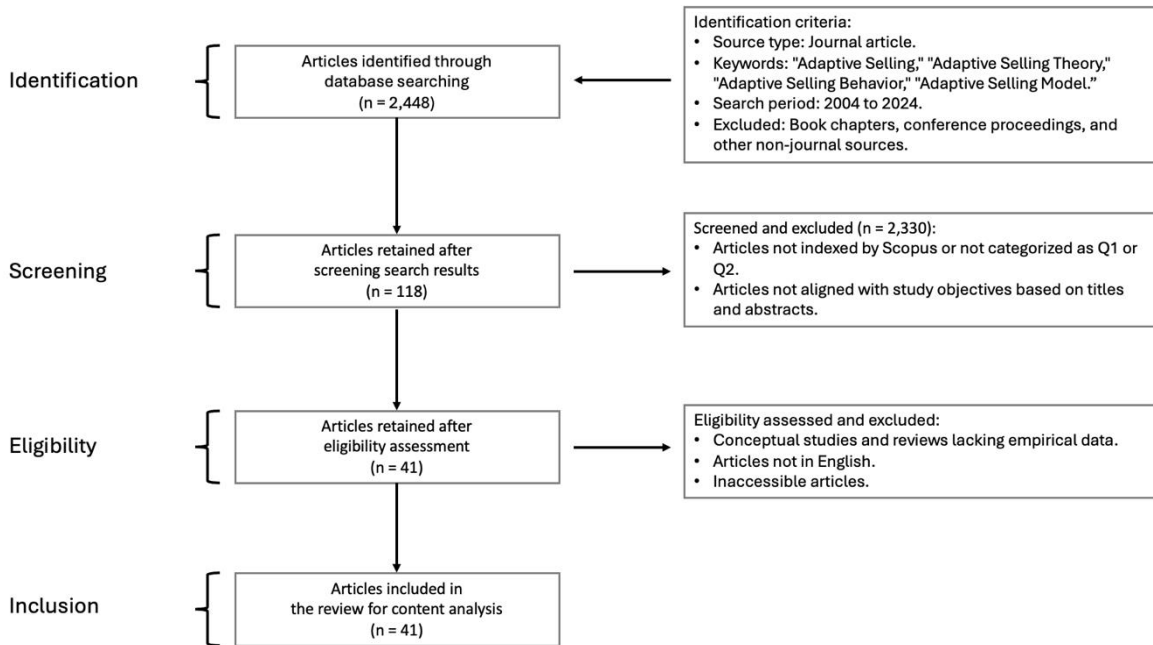


Figure 2. The flowchart of the article selection process using the PRISMA protocol.

2. ANTECEDENTS

Antecedents define the fundamental variables influencing an individual's choice to participate or refrain from a specific behavior (Paul & Benito, 2018). This paper examines the antecedents of adaptive selling by analyzing the components and elements that affect salespeople's adaptive decisions and behaviors in complicated and dynamic sales circumstances.

(Amenuvor et al., 2022a) categorize antecedents into three independent categories: salesperson-level factors, customer-level factors, and organizational-level factors. In their research, (Usman et al., 2024) introduced an additional category, specifically leadership-level factors (Table 1). Consequently, the author opted to employ these four categories to classify and organize antecedents.

Table 1. Summary of literature on the leadership-adaptive selling

Authors	Context and sample	Leadership-related antecedents of adaptive selling	Mediators/moderators
(Jaramillo et al., 2009)	501 salespeople from various industries in the US	Servant leadership	Mediator: Customer orientation Moderator: Sales experience
(Wong et al., 2015)	113 customer service team leaders and 285 team members from a sample of consumer electronics retailing firms in Beijing, China	Service leadership	
(Hu, 2021)	422 salespeople from various industry sectors in Taiwan	Service leadership	
(Tuan & Ngan, 2021)	882 sales employees and 137 sales managers from 39 tour companies in Vietnam	Ethical leadership	
(Luu, 2021)	529 sales employees and 82 sales managers belonging to 82 retail shops of a large telecommunication and computer company in Vietnam	Sales leader humility	Mediators: Salesperson's customer knowledge, Salespeople's adaptive self-efficacy, Salespeople's customer-oriented harmonious passion Moderator: Sales managers' adaptive selling
(Shafique et al., 2022)	313 salespeople of the retail brands (clothing, shoes, electronics, and home accessories outlets) operating in Pakistan	Inclusive leadership	Mediator: Psychological Flourishing Moderator: Work centrality
(Luu Trong Tuan, 2022)	418 salespersons and 52 supervisors in 52 tour companies in Vietnam	Servant leadership	Mediators : Salesperson resource seeking, Salesperson challenge seeking, Salesperson demand reducing Moderator : Salesperson perspective taking
(Usman et al., 2024)	505 supervisor-employee dyads from 102 organizations in China, operating across various manufacturing and service sectors, such as cement manufacturing, textile manufacturing, ceramics, telecommunication, hospitality, insurance, and energy. Data were collected using a time-lagged approach over two waves, two months apart	Spiritual leadership	Mediator: Salesperson resilience Moderator: Salesperson political skill (PS)

Source (s): adapted from (Usman et al., 2024), with additional modifications

3. SALESPERSON-LEVEL FACTORS

Within the Adaptive Selling (AS) framework, salesperson-level factors significantly influence the degree to which a salesperson may modify their strategy to address diverse customer requirements and navigate intricate sales scenarios. These characteristics encompass critical components that facilitate effective adaption. This article, supported by scholarly literature evidence, identifies 37 factors that affect salespeople's flexibility. The author employs the Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Attributes (KSAO) model to facilitate the categorization of these antecedents. The KSAO model is extensively utilized in individual research as it delineates fundamental human characteristics and correlates them with workplace efficacy. (Zwick et al., 2017)

Knowledge and skills are crucial in adaptive selling, enabling a salesperson to adjust to diverse and dynamic sales scenarios. Knowledge encompasses organized frameworks, both declarative and procedural, that assist individuals in categorizing sales scenarios and retrieving pertinent tactics from memory.

Skills are crucial for information acquisition, comprehending consumer requirements, and adjusting one's approach to the prevailing circumstances. Refined skills empower sales professionals to adapt to changes and deliver suitable solutions swiftly.

Ability is a crucial tool for a salesperson in fulfilling their duties. Abilities encompass inherent skills such as self-efficacy, cognitive adaptability, and emotional fortitude. This ability enables sales personnel to evaluate situations swiftly, comprehend evolving customer requirements, and modify their strategies to maintain efficacy in attaining sales objectives. Possessing robust abilities enables them to exhibit confidence and proactivity, thus enhancing their adaptability and performance in sales.

The "Other" category in the KSAO model facilitates adaptive selling by encompassing personality traits, motivation, risk tolerance, and additional aspects beyond knowledge, skills, and abilities. These traits enable salespeople to effectively adapt, confront problems, and explore novel strategies to succeed across diverse sales scenarios, consistent with their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

4. KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

Marketing research identifies several knowledge and skills-based antecedents that facilitate adaptive selling, including cultural intelligence (Alnakhli et al., 2020; Charoensukmongkol, 2020; Kimber et al., 2022; Pandey & Charoensukmongkol, 2019; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2022), customer qualification skills (Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2021, 2022), and hunting and farming orientations (Zheng et al., 2023), which are pertinent for adaptation strategies in addressing diverse customer needs.

Research highlights improvisational behaviour, job resourcefulness, and a learning orientation (Alnakhli et al., 2020; Charoensukmongkol & Suthatorn, 2021; Kuo et al., 2023; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2022) as critical elements that enhance sales force flexibility. The integration of sales experience, training, and the utilisation of sales technology enhances adaptation in sales (Alnakhli et al., 2020; Cron et al., 2023; Kimber et al., 2022). Personal attributes such as self-monitoring, thought self-leadership, and political skills (Alnakhli et al., 2020; Kimber et al., 2022; Kimura et al., 2019; Singh et al., 2017) assist sales professionals in navigating through varied market conditions and customer requirements.

Nonverbal immediacy (Limbu et al., 2016) enables salespeople to interpret client signals adeptly, while introspection (Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2022) promotes profound self-reflection and assessment.

Furthermore, knowledge and learning orientation (Alnakhli et al., 2020; Amenuvor et al., 2022a; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2022) are enhanced by selling skills (Kimber et al., 2022; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2022) and the utilization of social media (Itani et al., 2017; Majeed et al., 2023; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2021), thereby augmenting the ability of sales personnel to cultivate superior relationships with customers. Ultimately, time scarcity (Cron et al., 2023) promotes a salesperson's efficiency in executing a sales strategy.

These antecedents demonstrate that the amalgamation of knowledge and skills facilitates the execution of adaptive selling, allowing sales staff to be more sensitive to market fluctuations and customer requirements informed by their expertise.

5. ABILITIES

Within the Adaptive Selling framework, salespeople's abilities encompass inherent traits that facilitate their adaptation to evolving customer requirements. Empathy (Amenuvor et al., 2022a; Kimber et al., 2022; Limbu et al., 2016), cognitive empathy (Locander et al., 2020), and emotional intelligence (Chena & Jaramillo, 2014; Kimura et al., 2019; McFarland, 2019; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2022) enhance salespeople's capacity to comprehend customer viewpoints and emotions, thereby facilitating better relationships and responsiveness in diverse sales contexts.

Moreover, perceived environmental uncertainty (Kwak et al., 2019) facilitates the adaptation of suitable strategies in response to market fluctuations, while sales service ambidexterity (Agnihotri et al., 2017; Alnakhli et al., 2020) enables flexible transitions between sales and customer service as required. Perceived control (Khalid et al., 2024) and self-efficacy (Kimber et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2017) enhance self-confidence and initiative in confronting problems, while work centrality (Khalid et al., 2024) bolsters dedication to attaining optimal results.

6. OTHER ATTRIBUTES

Within the Adaptive Selling framework, the Other Attributes category includes diverse qualities that extend beyond a salesperson's fundamental knowledge, skills, and abilities yet significantly enhance flexibility and adaptability in different sales contexts. Customer orientation and customer relationship orientation (Alnakhli et al., 2020; Cron et al., 2023; Kimber et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022; R.M et al., 2019; Yeo et al., 2019) facilitate the establishment of enduring relationships with customers, enhancing trust and fostering a profound comprehension of customer needs.

Deliberation (Locander et al., 2014) enables salespeople to meticulously evaluate plans before execution, thus enhancing each contact's focus and efficacy.

Empowerment, goal orientation, and trait competitiveness (Locander et al., 2020; McFarland, 2019; Rigolizzo et al., 2023; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2022) collectively enhance salespeople's motivation and resilience in confronting challenges while cultivating a commitment to excel in target achievement.

Moreover, intrinsic motivation and motives (Amenuvor et al., 2022a; Kimber et al., 2022) serve as internal catalysts that sustain sales force concentration, particularly while confronting intricate and high-pressure circumstances. Personality traits (Homburg et al., 2024) and a quiet ego (Ross Gilbert et al., 2022) facilitate salesperson adaptability in reconciling customer orientation with personal demands throughout each engagement. Ultimately, social capital (Lee & Yoo, 2022) offers social network support that enhances the resilience of the sales team in confronting diverse sales obstacles.

7. CUSTOMER-LEVEL FACTORS

Combines factors from clients identified as sales targets, wherein the salesperson's comprehension of the customer's decision-making process significantly impacts their adaptive selling behavior.

(Alavi et al., 2019) elucidate four fundamental adaptations: Customers' Body Language, Customers' Communication Style, Customers' Needs, and Customers' Personality, which positively influence a salesperson's adaptive behavior. Furthermore, (Amenuvor et al., 2022a) identify an additional factor: Length of Relationship.

Customers' Body Language refers to a salesperson's capacity to interpret customers' nonverbal cues to ascertain their preferences and interests. Customers' Communication Style highlights the need for salespeople to adapt their communication approach to ensure effective message delivery.

Customers' Needs pertain to a salesperson's comprehensive awareness of customer requirements as the fundamental rationale for their purchase decisions, and Customers' Personality affects how customers react to different sales strategies. Length relationships foster adaptive behavior, as extended partnerships enable salespeople to understand clients better.

8. LEADERSHIP-LEVEL FACTORS

Adaptive selling is a mediating factor in the relationship between managerial leadership and sales performance (Altintas et al., 2017). This factor underscores the leadership styles and techniques employed by organizational leaders, which directly impact the adaptive performance of sales personnel. Effective leadership cultivates an environment that enhances salespeople's adaptability, strengthens competitiveness, and encourages creativity in sales strategies.

Prior research has identified five leadership styles that affect adaptive selling behavior: Ethical Leadership, which underscores the principles of honesty and integrity; and Spiritual Leadership, which focuses on the significance and purpose of work, motivating salespeople to serve with sincerity (Usman et al., 2024); Servant Leadership emphasizes fulfilling the team's needs to attain peak performance; Service Leadership involves leaders exemplifying customer service (Usman et al., 2024; Wong et al., 2015); and Inclusive Leadership fosters an environment where every team member feels valued and heard, thereby enhancing salespeople's engagement in the adaptive process (Shafique et al., 2022; Usman et al., 2024)

9. ORGANIZATIONAL-LEVEL FACTORS

This includes policy factors and organizational frameworks that facilitate the sales adaption process. These supportive organizational elements foster an environment conducive to efficient, adaptive selling by salespeople. An effective organizational framework, streamlined processes, and a culture conducive to adaptability can enhance sales force effectiveness, leading to superior outcomes and heightened customer satisfaction.

Four significant organizational factors, specifically Leadership Empowerment Behavior, denote leadership practices that allow sales personnel to make independent judgments. Perceived Supervisory Support refers to the assistance from supervisors that enhances the motivation and confidence of sales personnel in implementing creative sales strategies that align with customer requirements (Usman et al., 2024)

Managerial Control pertains to enforcing regulations and protocols by management that offer explicit guidance while permitting modifications to sales strategies in response to market dynamics (Altintas et al., 2017). In contrast, Managerial Latitude grants sales personnel the autonomy to tailor sales methodologies to align more closely with customer inclinations, enhancing adaptability and creativity in addressing market adversities (Khalid et al., 2024; Usman et al., 2024)

10. DECISIONS

Decisions within the ADO framework signifies the conduct and activities of sales personnel in reaction to antecedents, particularly in executing adaptive selling behavior (ASB) that influences performance outcomes (Paul & Benito, 2018)

The principle of Adaptive Selling Behavior is straightforward and intriguing: There is no singular best-selling method. This indicates that proficient salesmen will be flexible in comprehending and satisfying the needs of potential consumers in diverse circumstances.

Drawing from prior research on the antecedents of Adaptive Selling Behavior, the author categorizes six primary actions executed by salespeople exhibiting such behavior: Strategic Responsiveness, Persuasive Influence, Independent Decision-Making, Dynamic Adaptability, Empathic Understanding, and Resilient Flexibility, collectively termed SPIDER Decisions.

SPIDER Decisions offers a systematic method for categorizing decisions. It encompasses six fundamental adaptive behaviors that correspond with efficient sales techniques in intricate situations. Strategic Responsiveness refers to a salesperson's ability to adjust tactics swiftly and plan to meet market demand and customer requirements, enhancing sales effectiveness and alignment with clients (Amenuvor et al., 2022a; Charoensukmongkol, 2020)

Persuasive influence refers to a salesperson's behavior in employing targeted communication tactics to effectively engage a specific client profile, hence delivering messages that motivate customers and enhance relationships. (Limbu et al., 2016). Independent Decision-Making is a salesperson's capacity to make judgments in various field settings autonomously (Khalid et al., 2024), employing rational thought and intuition. (Locander et al., 2014). Dynamic adaptability refers to a salesperson's capacity to adjust to ever-changing and inconsistent sales situations (Alavi et al., 2019). Salespeople exhibiting Adaptive Selling behavior can deliver solutions customized to each customer's varied needs (Amenuvor et al., 2022b)

Empathic Understanding refers to a salesperson's ability to comprehend a customer's circumstances. This encompasses the capacity to analyze material thoroughly, discern client expectations and requirements, and meticulously monitor consumer reactions during communication. Furthermore, sales personnel possessing Empathic Understanding can promptly adapt to evolving consumer requirements through actions centered on customer happiness (Ahmadi et al., 2023; Jaramillo et al., 2009; Limbu et al., 2016). Adaptive selling behavior, manifested through Resilient Flexibility, denotes a salesperson's capacity to persistently serve consumers without yielding while maintaining adaptability in their persuasive strategies (Wong et al., 2015). This behavior is crucial because sales professionals encounter several problems and hurdles that necessitate resilience. By employing Resilient Flexibility, sales professionals can enhance value and elevate client happiness (Itani et al., 2017)

11. OUTCOMES

Outcomes denote assessments that emerge based on the implementation of a behavior (Paul & Benito, 2018). This review delineates three primary consequences of Adaptive Selling Behavior: Salesperson Outcome, Customer Outcome, and Mutual Outcome.

Salesperson Outcome describes the effects experienced by sales personnel due to the application of Adaptive Selling. The results encompass enhanced Administrative Performance (Limbu et al., 2016), In-Role Performance (Wong et al., 2015), Job Satisfaction (Amenuvor et al., 2022b; Kwak et al., 2019; R.M et al., 2019), and Sales Revenue Growth (Cron et al., 2023; Limbu et al., 2016)

Salespeople's adaptations enhance Market Share (Limbu et al., 2016) and Sales Performance (Altintas et al., 2017; Amenuvor et al., 2022b; Cron et al., 2023; Homburg et al., 2024; Kimber et al., 2022; Kwak et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2023). Nonetheless, significant flexibility in Adaptive Selling may also result in adverse effects, including cognitive anxiety and emotional exhaustion for salespeople (Sharma et al., 2024)

Customer Outcome encompasses the effects customers encounter due to the Adaptive Selling behavior employed by sales representatives. The outcomes refer to Customer Loyalty and Customer Satisfaction (Amenuvor et al., 2022b; Román & Martín, 2014; Singh et al., 2017; Usman et al., 2024), indicative of customer loyalty and satisfaction with the brand or product, alongside Customer Orientation (Ahmadi et al., 2023; Wong et al., 2015), wherein customers perceive that sales personnel comprehend and can fulfill their requirements.

Perceived Value (Khalid et al., 2024; Usman et al., 2024) enhances customers' beliefs that they receive adequate or superior value relative to the expenses incurred, whereas Positive Behavioral Intentions and Purchase Intention (Ahmadi et al., 2023; Usman et al., 2024) foster customers' intentions to repurchase or endorse products. Product satisfaction (Ahmadi et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2017) guarantees customer purchase satisfaction, reinforcing enduring beneficial relationships. The inability of salespeople to employ Adaptive Selling may result in discontent, erosion of trust, and diminished consumer inclination to repurchase or offer referrals

Mutual Outcomes encompass the reciprocal advantages experienced by salespeople and customers, indicative of the robustness and sustainability of their connection.

In this context, innovativeness (Aghazadeh & Zandi, 2022) manifests when salespeople exhibit greater creativity in providing pertinent solutions while clients recognize a more novel approach that aligns with their requirements. Service Recovery Performance (Wong et al., 2015) demonstrates salespeople's capacity to manage complaints proficiently, enhancing their professionalism and fostering a favorable perception among consumers. Additional outcomes, including Relationship Quality and Trust (Ahmadi et al., 2023; Amenuvor et al., 2022b; Guenzi et al., 2016; Limbu et al., 2016), enhance connections and establish a robust foundation for loyalty and the continuity of commercial ties.

HOW DO WE KNOW?

In this part, the publications using the TCM framework (Paul et al., 2017) are considered. The TCM framework facilitates the systematic evaluation of ideas, contextual elements, and methodological choices in the selected publications. It also enables the accurate identification of areas requiring further inquiry, thereby addressing study gaps and assisting researchers in refining their focus.

THEORIES

Theories serve as a framework for researchers, facilitating the formulation of research questions and hypotheses. Citing established theories enhances the legitimacy and dependability of academic research (Paul et al., 2017). Researchers have consistently employed theories to comprehend and elucidate the links between factors in adaptive selling behavior.

The evaluated research found 37 distinct theories, as illustrated in Table 2, which displays the frequency of these theories' utilization in the analyzed literature.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Social Cognitive Theory, Categorization Theory, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, and Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory are the most referenced theories in comparison to others.

CONTEXT

In this review, context describes the settings or situations under which research is undertaken (Paul et al., 2017). This review's context classification comprises four unique components: countries, industries, customer types, and sales channels. Each component seeks to elucidate different facets of the research. These components delineate the nation where the

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research was undertaken, specify the industry of interest, ascertain the target consumer demographic, and elucidate the sales channels examined in the current body of research.

The results indicate that the three countries with the most articles are the United States, South Korea, and Thailand. The five most examined industries are various industries, such as manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, retail, and financial services. Sales channels are dominated by B2B, with the primary sales method being through face-to-face interactions.

Table 2 : The most frequently occurring theories (T) within the articles retrieved for the review

Theories	No. of articles	References
Self-Determination Theory (SDT)	4	Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000) ; Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005)
Social Cognitive Theory	4	Bandura, A. (1991)
Categorization Theory	3	Roman, S., & Iacobucci, D. (2010)
Conservation of Resources (COR) theory	3	Hobfoll, S. E. (1989)
Job Demands-Resources theory	3	Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007, 2017)
Cognitive Resource Theory (CRT)	2	Fiedler, F. E. (1986, 1995)
Dual Process Theory	2	Epstein, S., & Pacini, R. (1999)
Equity theory	2	Oliver, R.L. and Swan, J.E. (1989)
Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)	2	Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1975), Ajzen, I. (2002)
Theory of self-monitoring	2	Snyder, M. (1974) Snyder, Mark. (1974, 1979)
Attribution theory	1	DeCarlo, T.E. (2005)
Cognitive Appraisal Theory	1	Lazarus, R. S. (1993)
Configuration theory	1	Vorhies, D. W., & Morgan, N. A. (2003)
Consumer socialization theory	1	Harrigan et al., (2021)
Control Theory	1	Carver and Scheier (1982); Klein (1989)
Descriptive Decision Theory	1	Banin et al. (2016)
Emotion intelligence theory	1	Evans et al., (2020); Wollny et al.,(2020)
Goal Perspective Theory	1	Shannahan, K. L., Bush, A. J., & Shannahan, R. J. (2013)
Human capital theory	1	Becker, G.S. (1962)
Job demands–resources model	1	Bakker, A.B. and Demerouti, E. (2007)
Knowledge-based theory	1	Autio, E., Sapienza, H.J. and Almeida, J.G. (2000) ; Sapienza, H.J., Autio, E., George, G. and Zahra, S.A. (2006)
Network Effect Theory	1	Katz and Shapiro, (1985); Metcalfe, (1995)
Organizational Information theory	1	Weick (1995)

Theories	No. of articles	References
Personal Construct Theory (PCT)	1	Kelly, G.A. (1955)
Person-organization fit theory	1	Kristof, A. L. (1996)
Reactance theory	1	Brehm, Jack (1966)
Relationship marketing theory	1	Dwyer, F.R., Schurr, P.H. and Oh, S. (1987)
Self-regulation theory	1	Williams, S. (1997)
Sensemaking Intuition Model (SIM)	1	Sonenshein, S. (2007)
Social Capital Theory	1	Nahapiet & Ghoshal (1998)
Social Exchange Theory	1	Blau, P. M. (1964)
Social Information Processing Theory	1	Salancik, G. R., & Pfeffer, J. (1978)
Social Linguistics Theory	1	Diehl, (2019) ; Seriwatana and Charoensukmongkol (2020)
Social Role theory	1	Eagly, A. H. (1997)
Exit– Voice theory	1	Hirschman, A.O. (1970)
Theory focusing on organizational resources	1	Grant, R. M. (1996)
Theory of organizing	1	Shannahan et al.(2013)
Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)	1	Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1975)
Theory of social identity	1	Sheldon Stryker, Peter J. Burke (2000)
Trait theory	1	Cobb-Clark and Schurer (2012) Conley, James J. (1985)

Table 3 and Figure 3 offer a more thorough understanding of the different scenarios examined in this study

Table 3 : List of contexts

Context	n of articles	Context	n of articles
Countries		Industries	
USA	8	Various Industries	11
South Korea	4	Manufacturing Sector	5
Thailand	4	Pharmaceutical	4
Various	4	Retail	3
China	3	Financial Services	3
India	3	Cosmetics	2
Germany	2	Export	2
Chile	1	International business	2
Ghana	1	Service Industry	2

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Context	n of articles	Context	n of articles
Countries		Industries	
Indonesia	1	Insurance	1
Iran	1	Agriculture	1

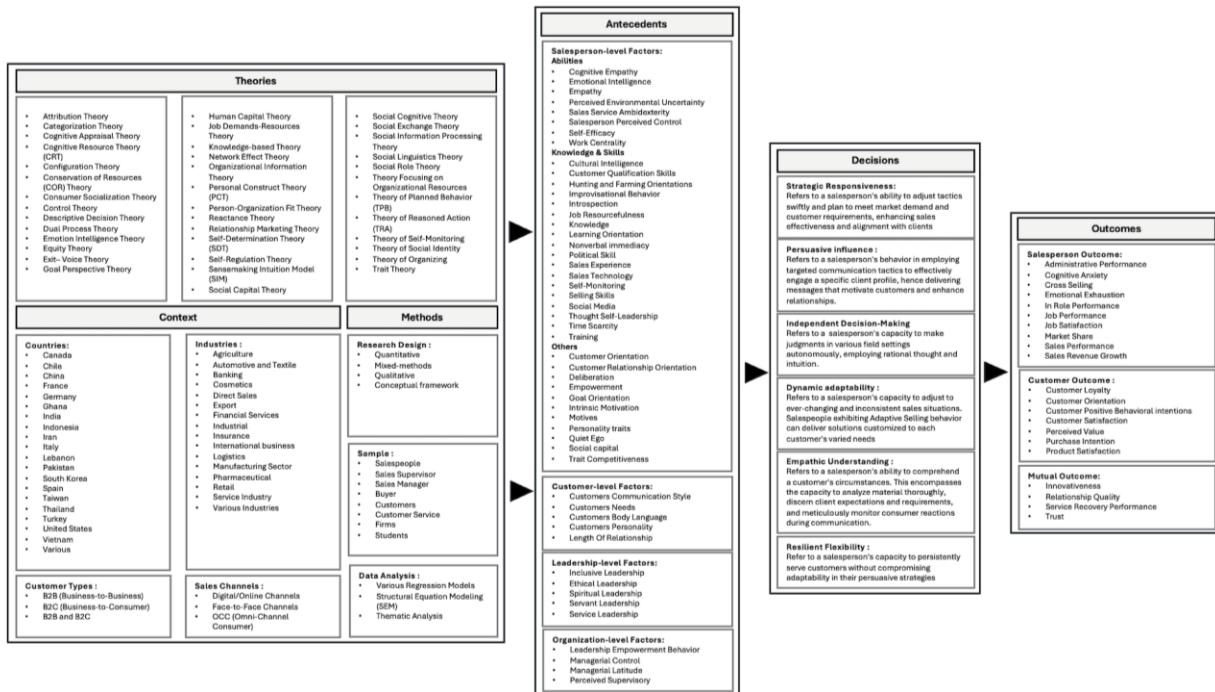


Figure 3. A Comprehensive overview of the literature on Adaptive Selling Behavior within the ADO-TCM framework

Source (s): adapted from (Paul et al., 2017) with additional modifications

METHODOLOGY

Table 4 consolidates the approach employed in studies on Adaptive Selling. This methodology encompasses systematic protocols for collecting and processing data used in empirical research. This study analyses the data-gathering methods and analytical techniques employed in the 41 examined studies. Most studies favor primary data collection methods, including surveys, interviews, and experimental approaches, to get data from diverse study subjects. The predominant focus of the research is on salespersons, comprising 33 articles, while

other examples include sales supervisors, sales managers, customers, customer service, companies, and students.

Table 4 : Research designs, samples and data analysis (M) within the articles retrieved for the review

Methods	No. of articles
Research design	
Quantitative	38
Mixed-methods	1
Qualitative	1
Conceptual framework	1
Sample	
Salespeople	33
Sales Supervisor	2
Sales Manager	3
Buyer	2
Customers	3
Customer Service	1
Firms	1
Students	1
Data analysis	
Various regression models	6
Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)	34
Thematic analysis	1

In data analysis, the majority of academics favor quantitative methodologies. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is highly favored and commonly employed among these methodologies. Regression analysis is a prominent quantitative tool frequently employed. Conversely, the quantity of studies employing qualitative data analysis methodologies is minimal, encompassing the development of theoretical models and case studies. Some writers employ a dynamic mixed-methods approach, integrating interviews with pertinent samples and refining and disseminating questionnaires for comprehensive analysis.

1. WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTIVE FUTURE RESEARCH AVENUES FOR ADAPTIVE SELLING?

An essential part of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is to provide future research directions. This review found that the Decision element in the adaptive selling behavior (ASB) framework is not well organized. Although the literature has identified various adaptive actions that salespeople can take, there is still no framework that systematically groups these actions into concrete, measurable steps. To answer this challenge, this research introduces the SPIDER framework (Strategic Responsiveness, Persuasive Influence, Independent Decision-Making, Dynamic Adaptability, Empathic Understanding, and Resilient Flexibility) as a new approach that provides a more transparent and more organized structure for Decisions in ASB.

2. SPIDER: Organizing Decisions in Adaptive Selling

SPIDER is a framework designed to group the actions taken by salespeople in complex sales situations. The six elements of SPIDER describe various adaptive decisions that are relevant in ASB:

1. **Strategic Responsiveness:** Responding to customer needs based on market analysis and data. Future research could explore how these strategies are influenced by salespeople's ability to leverage technology and customer data.
2. **Persuasive Influence:** The decision to use persuasive communication to build trust and influence customer decisions. Future research could examine how empathy and interpersonal communication skills support persuasion.
3. **Independent Decision-Making:** Decisions taken independently by salespeople without relying on managerial approval. Research could assess how this autonomy is influenced by antecedents such as self-efficacy and organizational support.
4. **Dynamic Adaptability:** The decision to adopt the approach flexibly based on changing customer needs or market situations. Research could explore how experience-based training or adaptive technology supports this flexibility.
5. **Empathic Understanding:** The decision to deeply understand customers' emotional and rational needs. Future research could focus on how empathy skills can be developed and measured as part of adaptive strategies.

6. **Resilient Flexibility:** The decision to remain flexible and resilient amidst challenges, such as customer resistance or target pressure. Research could explore how intrinsic motivation and managerial support help build this resilience.

3. SPIDER AS A GUIDE TO FUTURE RESEARCH

The SPIDER framework provides new research opportunities focused on developing, measuring, and implementing these elements:

- **SPIDER Development in an Adaptation Context:** Research could explore how antecedents, such as technology-based training, intrinsic motivation, or organizational support, influence each element of SPIDER. For example, how Strategic Responsiveness is supported by market knowledge or how Empathic Understanding is influenced by salesperson experience.
- **Measurement and Validation of SPIDER:** Future research could develop measurement scales for each element of SPIDER so that organizations can evaluate the adaptive capabilities of their salespeople. For example, persuasion abilities could be measured through case study testing or customer interaction simulations.
- **Interaction Between SPIDER Elements:** Further studies can explore the relationship between elements, for example, how Empathic Understanding strengthens Persuasive Influence or how Independent Decision-Making supports Dynamic Adaptability in changing sales situations.
- **Implementation of SPIDER in Different Industries:** Research can also explore how the SPIDER framework is applied in different sectors, such as financial services, technology, or retail, as well as in diverse cultural contexts.

4. SPIDER'S CONTRIBUTION TO A MORE STRUCTURED ASB

This research significantly contributes to organizing decisions in ASB by introducing SPIDER. This framework not only clarifies the adaptive actions taken by salespeople but also makes them more measurable and implementable in various contexts. SPIDER's elements offer academics and practitioners a practical and strategic guide to understanding and improving the effectiveness of sales force adaptation.

a. THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research links antecedents, decisions, and decisions in Adaptive Selling Behaviour (ASB) via the ADO framework, presenting SPIDER Decisions as a methodical approach to comprehending sales force adaptive behavior. The six components—Strategic Responsiveness, Persuasive Influence, Independent Decision-Making, Dynamic Adaptability, Empathic Understanding, and Resilient Flexibility—offer theoretical and practical frameworks for navigating the intricacies of contemporary sales.

b. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The SPIDER framework provides a new perspective for examining the primary factors that affect salespeople's adaptive behavior. Antecedents like self-efficacy, cultural intelligence, market knowledge, and learning orientation can be correlated with distinct SPIDER elements. Cultural intelligence is essential for fostering empathic understanding, but a learning orientation improves dynamic adaptability.

Future research can enhance the literature by concentrating on under-represented markets like Southeast Asia or multichannel sales methods to tackle contextual problems. Moreover, SPIDER facilitates integration with modern theories like adaptive leadership and digital literacy, which are progressively pertinent in digital business ecosystems. Empirical research can confirm the influence of these antecedents on customer satisfaction and sales performance, offering practical insights for academics and industry.

c. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

From the management perspective, SPIDER is a practical framework for enhancing sales force decision-making. Strategic Responsiveness enables sales personnel to modify their strategy based on market variations and predictive analytics. Persuasive Influence enhances customer connections via good communication and emotional connection. Independent Decision-Making and Dynamic Adaptability provide rapid and flexible responses to evolving client demands. Empathic Understanding improves comprehension of clients' emotional and cognitive needs, cultivating more trust. Resilient Flexibility guarantees persistence when facing hurdles such as consumer opposition or target demands.

Incorporating artificial intelligence techniques, such as sentiment analysis for Empathic Understanding and scenario simulations for Resilient Flexibility, can enhance the execution of

SPIDER. Managerial support and investment in adaptive training programs augment its efficacy, rendering SPIDER a strategic instrument for enhancing sales performance.

CONCLUSIONS

This research presents a systematic literature review to explore Adaptive Selling Behavior (ASB) through two main frameworks: ADO and TCM. By analyzing 41 articles published between 2004 and 2024, this research provides in-depth insight into the antecedents, decisions, and outcomes in ASB and the theoretical, regional, and methodological context of previous research.

1. ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study answers the first question, "What is known about adaptive selling, including the antecedents, decisions, and outcomes that affect its execution?" by demonstrating that antecedents in ASB can be categorized into four main groups: salesperson, customer, leadership, and organization. These antecedents influence adaptive decisions systematically classified within the SPIDER framework. SPIDER provides a structured approach to understanding how adaptive behaviors are executed in complex sales scenarios. Outcomes from ASB include salesperson outcomes, customer outcomes, and mutual outcomes, showcasing the multidimensional impact of ASB on various stakeholders.

To answer the second question, "How has adaptive selling been researched in various theoretical contexts, research methods, and industry environments, and what are its limitations?" this study highlights that the most frequently used theories include Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Social Cognitive Theory, and Categorization Theory. Prior research predominantly focuses on developed markets like the United States and South Korea, while underrepresented markets like Southeast Asia remain largely unexplored. Similarly, research has been concentrated in industries like manufacturing and pharmaceuticals, with limited attention to service sectors and digital platforms. Quantitative surveys dominate the methodological landscape, whereas qualitative and experimental approaches are scarce, underscoring the need for methodological diversification.

The third question, "How can adaptive selling be translated into real, measurable behavior, and how can the SPIDER framework address this gap?" is answered by proposing the SPIDER framework as a tool for operationalizing adaptive selling into measurable actions. Future research could develop metrics for each SPIDER element, such as assessing Persuasive Influence through customer interaction simulations or measuring Resilient Flexibility via scenario-based stress tests.

Furthermore, the SPIDER framework allows exploration of interrelationships between its elements, such as how Empathic Understanding enhances Persuasive Influence organization how Independent Decision Making supports Dynamic Adaptability in rapidly changing sales environments. Expanding the application of SPIDER across diverse geographies and industries presents significant opportunities to address practical challenges in adaptive selling.

2. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

This study has several limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, it focuses exclusively on English-language articles from Scopus-indexed Q1 and Q2 journals, which may exclude relevant insights from other sources. Second, the reliance on quantitative survey-based methods in the reviewed literature highlights a methodological gap, as alternative approaches such as qualitative case studies, longitudinal research, and experimental designs remain underutilized. Lastly, the geographical bias toward developed markets underscores the need for broader exploration in emerging regions like Southeast Asia and Africa.

To overcome these limitations, future studies should:

- Broaden selection criteria to include diverse publication types and underrepresented regions.
- Explore methodological innovations, such as mixed-methods approaches, to capture the dynamic and context-dependent nature of ASB.
- Develop tools for empirically measuring SPIDER elements and their interrelationships.
- Investigate SPIDER's applicability in evolving sales environments, such as omnichannel platforms and digital-first ecosystems.

By addressing these gaps, future research can advance theoretical understanding and practical application of ASB, ensuring its relevance in increasingly complex and competitive sales landscapes.

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