

# BACHELOR THESIS

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## How may I help you?

A study of salespeople behavior influencing  
customer satisfaction of service.

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## Abstract

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Through the years customer orientation is an area of marketing that has received much attention. One of the key aspects of customer orientation is the “ability of the salespeople to help their customers”. There has been research on how salesperson’s behavior influences customer orientation. However, previous research has been conducted on the business unit level. At the moment there is no research done on how a salesperson’s individual behavior affects a company’s overall customer orientation. Therefore, this dissertation will try to fill the research gap on how salesperson’s individual behavior affects overall customer orientation.

The study is performed on the three major electronic retail stores in the Swedish market. Twelve types of behaviors were selected and were tested with the mystery shopper method and observations of customers in the stores. Two other behaviors of salespeople were discovered. The results show that many of the behaviors described in theories do apply to salesperson’s individual behavior. However, there are some behaviors that are more common than others. The conclusion is that even though there are some common salespeople behaviors, it is very individual how salespeople behave towards customers.

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**Key words:** Salesperson’s behavior, Customer orientation, Market orientation, Customer satisfaction of service, retail sector

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# 1. Introduction

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*This chapter describes the background, problem, purpose, research question and theoretical limitations. At the end of this chapter there is an outline of the rest of this dissertation.*

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## 1.1 Background

There are several functions in a business that are important. However, there is one that might be considered as central and that is, marketing. Marketing is important since it seeks to attract new customers and to keep the current customers by delivering satisfaction (Kotler, Wong, Saunders and Armstrong, 2005). Marketing is defined as “a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others” (Kotler *et al.*, 2005, p.6). The definition refers to how sellers search for buyers to identify the buyers’ needs. After the needs are identified, the process goes on with designing products and services. The last stage of the process is to advertise and deliver the products and services (Kotler *et al.*, 2005). Within the field of marketing customer orientation is an area that has received much attention through the years. Customer oriented marketing is where a company takes the consumers’ point of view when planning marketing activities. It is important to consider the consumers’ point of view to establish a long lasting and profitable relationship (*ibid*). According to Stock and Hoyer (2005), one of the key aspects of customer orientation is the “ability of the salespeople to help their customers and the quality of the customer-salesperson relationship” (Stock and Hoyer, 2005 p.1), this aspect also relates to the topic of this paper, that is how to achieve customer satisfaction. Customer orientation also has an impact on performance of companies in a positive way (Narver and Slater 1990).

Following is an example of how customer orientation is dealt with in different stores: A woman walks in to three different stores in hope of finding a laptop. In the first store they do not have the model she wants. However, the salesperson tries to sell her another model. In the second store the salesperson tells the woman that they have all the models she wants. She tells the salesperson that she has a money limit of \$2000 and the salesperson begins to bring up the negative sides of buying a laptop for that low price. In the third store the salesperson asks her for what purpose this laptop will be used and then

recommends a laptop in accordance with that purpose (Assael, 1995). According to Assael (1995) the third store is most likely to make a sale because of the more accurate way to estimate the customers' needs. The example reflects the importance of customer orientation. Customer orientation is defined as the adequate understanding of the target buyers. With this understanding, it is possible to continuously create better value (Narver and Slater, 1990; Slater, Narver 2000). Therefore, the goal of this dissertation is to improve the understanding on how a salesperson's behavior influences the customers' satisfaction or service.

## **1.2 Problem formulation**

According to Kohli and Jaworski (1993), the marketing concept can be seen as the philosophical foundation of marketing orientation, which is an interesting area. There are different ways to define market orientation. One way to define market orientation is as a set of beliefs to put the customers' needs first (Deshpande, Farley and Webster JR., 2000). Another definition implies that market orientation is a deep understanding of customers' needs and it is important to satisfy them with relevant products and services by creating value to the customers (Kohli and Jaworski, 1993). A third way is to define it as Kotler *et al.* (2005) did, who claims that a good understanding of the customers' need, might lead to creation of products and services that meet existing and latent needs now or in the future. However, Narver and Slater (1990) have suggested another definition of market orientation as consisting of behavior components such as customer orientation, competitor orientation and interfunctional coordination (Langerak, 2001). However, for the purpose of this paper, the first two definitions mentioned above fit better; (1) market orientation is a set of beliefs to put the customers' needs first (Deshpande, Farley and Webster JR., 2000) (2) market orientation is a deep understanding of customers' needs and it is important to satisfy them with relevant products and services by creating value to the customers (Kohli and Jaworski, 1993).

Previous research about how salesperson behaviors influence customer orientation has been conducted on the business unit level (Pelham, 2009). At the moment there is no research done on how a salespersons' individual behavior affects a company's overall customer orientation with the main perspective of customers need, satisfaction and value creation. This is especially important to consider in the retail sector, since here the large part of offering is service. Specific factors in retailing are that usually they are networking

organizations, involve a number of more or less independent companies and add value through service to a great extent (Elg, 2001). According to another article by Elg (2003) concerning the relationship between retailers and suppliers, the conclusion was that trust is an important factor to maintain a good long-term relationship. Also, the previous experience that the buyer and seller had before is an important factor to continue the cooperation (*ibid*). The example about trust can be compared with the importance of customer orientation, because the supplier can be seen as the customer and the retailer as the company. Salespeople are in direct contact with thousands of customers and their behaviors are important in customers' overall perception of the store and the products they buy (Cross, Brashear, Rigdon and Bellenger, 2007). It is very important to focus on salespeople behavior since it is their actions that will determine if the customers' are satisfied with the purchase or not (Kotler and Keller, 2009).

A characteristic feature of current research in market orientation is the usage of quantitative methods. This study is qualitative since it aims for a deeper understanding of salespeople behaviors as elements of customer orientation and market orientation. Other research has mainly used quantitative methods and has, therefore, not looked at the specific behavior of salespeople that can be identified with the help of qualitative observations (Piercy, Cravens and Lane, 2008). However, there have been investigations of different behaviors that salespeople can use to affect the customers emotions. An example from that research is that customers felt frustrated when the salespeople let down their desired purchase (Kapoor and Kulshrestha, 2009). Therefore, it is important to explore how the salespeople behave towards customers in order to see how the customers react. Even though there has been much research on this topic, there is limited research from a retail perspective. More empirical studies from the retail perspective are needed as are studies on how market orientation influences the performance in retailing (Elg, 2003).

### **1.3 Research questions**

The aim of this study is to explain how salesperson behaviors reflect customer orientation. Thus, the research question is:

*Which is the critical salesperson behavior that possibly leads to positive customer experience of service?*

By critical salesperson behavior the intention is common behaviors used by salespeople in the store. Also, the research is not doing any customer study but only investigate the salesperson from the researchers' point of view. The customer experience is discussed as a possible outcome of the salespeople behaviors.

#### **1.4 Limitations**

Limitations of this research are that only one type of store will be looked at. The reason for this is because it would require a lot more time than available for this dissertation to examine different types of stores and salespeople. The theories of this dissertation are limited to marketing theories. Therefore, we have not used any theories in the area of psychology which could be used in behavior studies. Due to limitation of time we have not included competencies, age or the years of experience of the salespeople.

#### **1.5 Outline**

This dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter presents the background, problem, research question and theoretical limitations. The second chapter presents the research philosophy, research approach, choice of theory and choice of methodology. This is followed by chapter three which consists of the theoretical literature review and the theories used to create a model. Chapter four presents the research design, data collection and the operationalization. In chapter five the empirical findings are presented and discussed. In chapter six, which is the last chapter, the conclusions, practical implications and suggestions for future research is presented.

## 2. Research Method

*In this chapter the different choices of methodology are presented. The purpose with this chapter is to give an outline of the method used in this dissertation. It contains research philosophies, research approach, choice of theory and choice of methodology.*

### 2.1 Introduction

To better understand how the different stages of research methodology are dependent on each other, the research onion model in Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) is useful. This model consists of six different layers, placed as follows: research philosophies, research approach, research strategies, research choices, research time horizons and finally data collection and data analysis. When using the research onion model, you start working with the outer layers such as research philosophies and then continue towards the centre of the onion with data collection and data analysis. A similar structure will be used in this dissertation as well.

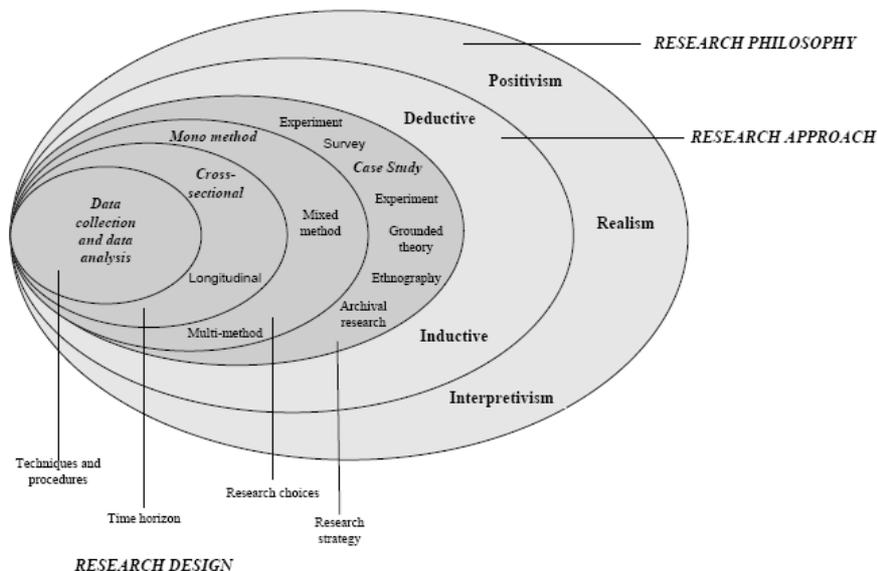


Figure 2.1 The research onion

(Based on Saunders *et al.*, (2009) *Research methods for business students* p. 138)

## **2.2 Research philosophy**

The research philosophy allows the writers to make assumptions about how they view the world. These assumptions can be very helpful because they will support the research methods and strategies that the researchers will use. The different philosophies are Positivism, Realism, Interpretivism and Pragmatism (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Positivism allows the researcher to observe social reality and the final result can then be a law-like generalization. Within this philosophy the researcher then uses already existing theories to develop different hypothesis that they later will test (*ibid*). The realistic philosophy implicates that the world as we observe it through our senses is the reality. Some of the characteristics of this philosophy are the same as those of the positivistic philosophy; both assume a scientific approach to the development of knowledge (*ibid*). Interpretivism suggests that the Positivistic approach is missing the explanation of the difficulty in the social world of business and management. Because the roles of individuals and actors are highly different, the researchers cannot make law-like generalizations about human as “social actors” (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The last philosophy, Pragmatism, allows the researcher to choose a combination of all the different philosophies, because it is unlikely to only use and follow one philosophy (*ibid*).

This dissertation will follow an interpretivistic research philosophy. There will not be any statistically tested hypotheses. Instead, experiments and observations will be used to investigate the individual level of salespersons.

## **2.3 Research approach**

There are two different ways to approach a research, the inductive and the deductive approach.

The deductive approach uses already existing literature and theories to develop hypotheses and new theories. By using a deductive approach, it is possible to build hypotheses based on existing theories. The data collected can then be used to test the hypotheses. The deductive approach starts with theory. It then continues by using the data collected to confirm or reject the constructed hypotheses. The inductive approach is the opposite of the deductive. In an inductive approach, the researchers begin with the data collection. The researchers will then create a theory based on the collected data (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

In this dissertation the abductive approach will be used. The abductive approach is a mixture of deductive theory-driven approach, and inductive empirical-driven approach. There are already theories in this area which we could use in our research. Also, because this thesis is open for new findings that might change the result the abductive approach is used.

#### **2.4 Choice of theory**

There are already several theories in the area which can be used. One of the major theories is the Maslow's Hierarchy of Motivation. Some other theories will also be used but less extensively. One of these is the Customer-salesperson Communication (Assael, 1995) which is a part of the Word of Mouth theory. The Five Stage Model theory will also be used. All these theories, to some extent explain and add understanding to the topic we aim to study.

#### **2.5 Choice of methodology**

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate how a salesperson's behaviors, on an individual level, influence customers' satisfaction level. The field of study is covered to a certain extent but there are still areas not covered; therefore, an interpretivistic research philosophy will be used with an abductive approach. Although the field is well covered in many areas, the area studied in this dissertation has not been closely observed. Therefore, an abductive approach with current theories and literature is possible to use. A model will be created from the theories. This model will be used when collecting data and to get a deeper analysis.

## 3. Literature review

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*This chapter contains the literature review. A selection of customer orientation theories will be explained. In the end there will be a model to explain the influences of customer satisfaction of service.*

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### 3.1 Introduction of literature review

In the literature review, we will begin with a historical overview of what has been written before and introduce our theories. We will then explain why market orientation is important for companies. The next part consists of a discussion about how market orientation is measured. Finally, the theories used will be presented; these are Maslow's Hierarchy of Motivation, the Five Stage Model and Word of Mouth.

### 3.2 Historical overview

In 1750, the first origins of modern marketing was found and traced back to Britain, followed by the USA and Germany in 1830. Modern marketing was established during the industrial revolution (Jobber and Fahy, 2006). During the industrial revolution, the growth, production and distribution channels for companies advanced. This gave the institutions of marketing the chance to develop advertising media and distribution channels. However, the field of studying marketing did not begin until the early part of the twentieth-century. During this time the issues related to distribution was examined (*ibid*). The focus of marketing was changed in 1950s and 1960s, to the techniques of marketing with focus on "how to do it". In recent time, the philosophy of marketing has been concentrating on the way of doing business, the nature and impact of marketing on society and stakeholders (Jobber and Fahy, 2006).

In short, the concepts and theories explaining today's view of customer orientation have been developed through the years. It has developed from the focus on production and product (1750s – 1830s) to today's two new concepts (1950s and 1960s), the societal and market concept. According to Kohli and Jaworski (1993), the market concept led to the foundation of market orientation which also, according to Kotler *et al.* (2005), can be

referred to as customer orientation. Today, researchers have established that market orientation has a positive effect on financial performance, organizational innovativeness, organizational learning, employee attitudes and customer-oriented behavior of salesperson (Langerak, 2001).

### **3.3 Why market orientation is important for companies**

If companies want to succeed or simply survive in today's marketplace, they are forced to be customer-centered, which means that they must deliver superior value to their target customers (Kotler *et al.*, 2005).

The concept of market orientation has been extensively discussed during the last decade. According to Hult's (1999), most research on marketing orientation has been developed in the USA. However, marketing orientation has also been important for other countries lately. For example, the breakup of the Soviet Union forced Russian firms to change their operating environment dramatically to fit the new market outside Russia (Hult, 1999). Market orientation is also considered important for companies, because it has a high impact on the performance of the company (Tse, Sin, Yau, Lee and Chow, 2004). However, performance depends on how strong position a company has in the market. Tse *et al.* (2004), claim that a company with a strong position should focus on market orientation and relationship marketing as strategies because it will benefit the company more. This statement can be supported by Hooley and Gray (2002), who also found that performance and market orientation has a positive related connection, although they focus on service firms while Tse *et al.* (2004) focus on Chinese firms.

Because of the internationalization, the competition has been more intensified and the companies are now more forced to respond to consumers needs (Elg, 2001). Therefore, companies that want to succeed or to simply survive in today's marketplace are forced to be customer-centered, which means that companies must deliver superior value to their target customers (Kotler *et al.*, 2005). One way to achieve this can be done through the salespersons of a firm. The salesperson's attitude towards customer orientation affects the customer's satisfaction, which Stock and Hoyer (2005) claims. However, all the other departments of the firm can also deliver more customer satisfaction by adding more value for the customer into the product, for example be able to produce the product faster so the customer does not have to wait for delivery. To make people believe in something that someone is convincing them about, there has to be a two-way communication. It is only

possible to gain personal insights and individual thinking from someone through sharing opinions with others. Therefore there has to be a dialogue (Lancaster and Van Der Velden, 2004). That is something that salespersons can have in mind, when they are trying to convince a customer to buy a certain product. However, in retailing there are specific conditions that need to be taken into consideration. One of them is that retailers offer a mix of services, facilities and products. Therefore, there is a challenge for retailers to give the consumers a unique and individual combination of these (Elg, 2001). Another point is that retailers become more important actors within businesses, because of the successful start of retailer brands. Overall they control more of the value adding functions within the distribution channel (*ibid*).

According to an article by Kohli and Jaworski (1990), a market-oriented organization is one that is consistent with the marketing concept in the actions. Also, research has suggested that companies that are more market-oriented appear to be more successful, since these companies understand their customers better. When industry technology, customers' needs and behaviors change rapidly or the markets change and competition is intense, the firms becomes more aware of what their competitors are offering and can therefore compete with them better (Gray and Hooley, 2002).

### **3.4 How is market orientation measured**

One measurement that is commonly used is the scale that Narver and Slater developed in 1990. They suggest that three behavioral components affect the long term profit in a positive way for a company. These behavioral components are: customer orientation, competitor orientation and interfunctional coordination (Narver and Slater, 1990). The behavioral components have different factors that are measured. In customer orientation Narver and Slater (1990) measured some affecting factors. Three examples of these are: to create customer value, understand customer needs and after sales services (*ibid*). In competitor orientation there are also different factors that were measured. Two examples of these are that salespersons share competitors' information and respond rapidly to competitors' actions. In interfunctional coordination there are also different factors to measure. Three examples of these are: information share among functions, all functions contribute to customer value and share resources with other business units (*ibid*). However, to always measure the same behavioral components would not give deeper insights on which behavior the salespeople really uses. Because every individual

salesperson might have other behavioral components than the ones that Narver and Slater came up with. These other behavior components might affect the customers' satisfaction of the service differently. Therefore, to do research with an open eye on new behavior components might give a wider perspective of influencing components. However, Narver and Slater also suggest that this scale is not ultimate to use, it needs to include more behavior components, depending on what the aim is to measure (*Ibid*).

Additionally, in the research by Piercy, Cravens and Lane (2009), they have asked managers to answer the questions about the salespeople. However, we believe that you cannot get the right information by asking the managers for answers. To get the information from the salespersons and how they act, it is vital to do the research at the individual level. Therefore, to get the insights of the real behaviors of salespersons that they exhibit in the interaction with the customers, it is important to do research at the salespersons individual level.

#### *3.4.1 Maslow's theory of motivation and salespersons problem solving*

Abraham Maslow wanted to clarify why people are driven by specific needs at specific times (Kotler *et al.*, 2005; Kotler, 1984). He found that human needs are arranged in a hierarchy, from the most vital to the least vital. The order of importance is (1) physiological needs, (2) safety needs, (3) social needs, (4) esteem needs, (5) cognitive needs, (6) aesthetic needs and (7) self-actualization needs. The theory states that a person is first motivated to satisfy the most important need. When that need is satisfied, the motivator for that specific need will end and then the person will be motivated to satisfy the next important need and so on (*ibid*). However, it is known that Maslow's hierarchy of motivation is not universal for all cultures. One example is that in Japan and German-speaking countries, people are most motivated by the need for order (aesthetic needs) and belonging (esteem needs) (Kotler *et al.*, 2005; Kotler, 1984).

This theory is useful for this dissertation because it explains in which extent salespeople can motivate customers to purchase a certain product, by identify a need. To identify the need it is important that the salespeople approaches the customer and ask if assistance is needed. Also, it explains how important it is that salespersons ask the customers different questions about the possible purchase, so they know what they should offer the customers. If the customer does not have any idea of what product to buy, the salesperson needs to interact with the customer by listening and questioning in order to solve the

problem for the customer (Assael, 1995). Otherwise, the salespersons might offer the customer a product that the customer do not want or need at the time. Therefore, it is important for the salespeople to be aware of what status the customers want to achieve to be able to offer the right product.

In Pelham's article (2009), he claimed that problem solving is one of the factors that are included for salespersons when interacting with customers. He also claims that this type of interaction is dependable of a market oriented culture, which values customer satisfaction and the value creation for the customers. An important part of solving a problem for a customer is, for the salesperson to first determine in which stage of need the customer is in. The stages of need in theory can be referred back to Maslow's theory of motivation (Kotler *et al.*, 2005; Kotler, 1984). In most cases the customer will probably ask the salesperson or friend for information when the customer has determined his or her needs arousal (Lilien *et al.*, 1992). If the customer already has a slight idea of what product he or she wants, but the store does not have the specific product the customer is looking for, the salespeople might influence the customer to buy a similar product. This might still solve the problem for the customer (*ibid*).

#### *3.4.2 Word-of-mouth communication and interaction*

The Word-of-mouth communication is defined as an interpersonal communication between two or more individuals. These individuals can be members of a reference groups, customers or salespeople. This type of communication occurs not only between friends and relatives, but also between salespersons and consumers. Below, there is a model of customer-salesperson communication that can be used in this thesis. The customer-salesperson communication model explains the interaction between salesperson and the customer. The model tries to determine the customers' needs by interacting with the customer. Depending on what the customers need is, the sale strategy will be developed and the salespeople may even try to change the customers' preferences by offering similar products, according to the model.

People communicate every day, from purchases between seller and buyer, to talking with each other in general. The word-of-mouth communication has influence on us all. In retail store, word-of-mouth from the salesperson influences the buyers.

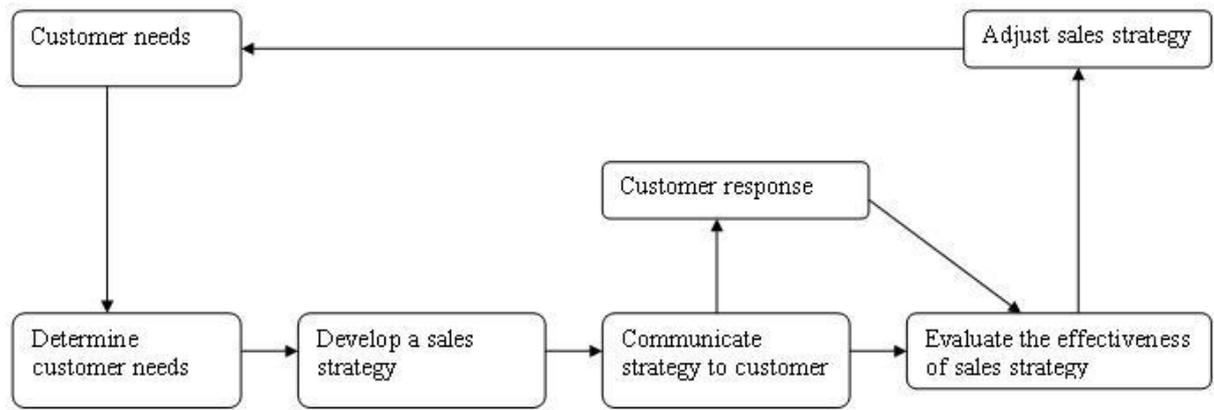


Figure 3.1 The customer-salesperson communication model

(Based on Assael, (1995) *Consumer behavior and marketing action* p. 648)

The interaction between the customer and the salesperson is a very important factor for the companies to consider. According to Pelham (2009), sales interaction with the focus on listening to customers is connected with salespersons consulting behavior. The result of the salespersons consulting behavior is consistent with the culture in market orientation, which values customer satisfaction (Pelham 2009). Also, to ask questions about the customer wants and not only listening is very important to be able to offer the right product for the customer. The word of mouth theory is believed to be an essential component of the interaction between a salesperson and a customer (Assael, 1995). The key factor of the theory is to communicate a sales strategy to the customer. The sales strategy starts with decide the customer's needs and to formulate a sales strategy based on these needs. Thereafter, the customer give response to the sales strategy and then the salespersons evaluates it and adjust the strategy so that it better meet the customer's needs (*ibid*).

### 3.4.3 Five stage model, Need and Information search

To understand the customer and what the customer wants when interested in a product, salesperson needs to determine what product that suit the customer. The five stage model consist of five stages of customers decisions. The five steps of purchase cycle are the need arousal, information search, evaluation, purchase and post-purchase feelings. It is therefore a theory that can be used in this dissertation, because at the second stage the customer will involve family, friends and also reference sources like salespersons due to information search (Fill, 2002). At this point the salesperson has the ultimate opportunity

to influence the possible customer of which product to buy. Also, the salesperson will have the possibility to ask questions of what the customer wants so that the salesperson could give the best offer for the customer to consider.

Information search is the second stage where the consumer will enter one of two states. The first state is called heightened attention. It means that the consumer becomes alert to information which could lead them to satisfaction. The second state is active information search. During the second stage the consumer will seek information through personal, commercial or public sources. After the search process, the consumer should have a group of brand to choose from. The group of product is called the evoked set, consideration set and the relevant set. The relevant set is less important since it contain the brand that have been evaluated and then rejected. When several brands are eliminated the consumer will make a purchase, the remaining sets of brands are called the choice set (Lilien *et al.*, 1992).

#### *3.4.4 Good and Bad - End experience*

According to an article by Richard B Chase and Sriram Dasu (2001), using behavioral science is possible to additionally create customer satisfaction. The reason for the possibility to use behavioral science is because, it is important to finish the purchase with a strong end experience. They mean that last impression of a purchase is far more essential than the first impression. Chase and Dasu (2001) also claim that, it is better to start with bad experience and end with a good one, since the last impression will be remembered. Therefore, this theory will be helpful. In this dissertation, the data collection of salesperson stops once out of the store. Thus, this theory will determine the last impression and the last chance the salespeople has in the store, to additionally give a good experience. However, the salesperson might end with a neutral experience.

#### *3.4.5 Customer satisfaction of service*

In this thesis, service is defined as Kotler *et al.* (2005) does. The definition is that service is any activities that benefit one party offered by another party (Kotler *et al.*, 2005). The definition can be in terms of a salesperson helping a customer to find a solution to the need, which is the term that will be used in this research.

One way customer satisfaction is defined is as a concept which refers to the feeling of well-being and pleasure from obtaining a product or service that meet the expectation of a

customer (Pizam and Ellis, 1999). However, there is another definition by Richard Oliver that is more commonly used. Richard meant that before customer purchase a good or a service, the customer have pre-purchase expectations about the estimated performance. Even though Richard's definition is more common, this thesis will focus on the first definition mentioned, well-being and pleasure from obtaining a product or service. Szymanski's and Henard's (2001), refers customer satisfaction to performance, which means that customers are likely to be satisfied if the salesperson can provide the customers with what they need, want or desire. Therefore, it is important with customer satisfaction, as it can lead to future intention of purchases from customers, which could lead to better profits and word-of-mouth marketing that will lower the marketing cost for a company (McDougall and Levesque, 2000).

### **3.5 Conclusion of literature review**

From the presented theories several factors affecting customer satisfaction of service will be described. In the following text the different stages of the created model is discussed.

#### *3.5.1 Approach customer*

According to the five stage model written before, the first stage in the buying process is the customers need arousal (Fill, 2002). It is evident that the salespeople take this chance to start the interaction with the customer so that the salesperson can be a part of the buying process from the beginning. In this first stage it is important that the salesperson gives a good first impression to the customer. This first impression and the salesperson's future behavior towards the customer will affect how much the customer will rely on the information given from the salesperson. Therefore, it is important for the salesperson to approach the customer.

#### *3.5.2 Determine customer needs*

To be able to start the purchase process in the right way the salesperson needs to gain the information from the customer of what the customer wants. Also, here the customers search for information of what product to buy (Fill, 2002). For the salespeople it means that they need to ask the customers what they want and listen to the customer. It is also important that the customer keeps this need in mind during the whole purchase process. This is because the customer might not be satisfied with the first product suggested from the salesperson and then needs to adjust the sales strategy with the same need in mind.

### *3.5.3 Develop a sales strategy*

According to Jaworski and Kohli (1993) under responsiveness in their market orientation scale, the development of relevant products to satisfy customer needs is important. Jaworski and Kohli also claim that customer needs and expectation changes overtime, which requires constantly delivering high quality products and services. Therefore, we can relate their definition to marketing (product) offer. Thus, it is important for salesperson to have in mind that the first product they offer will most likely change due the process of finding the final solution of the customer's problem.

At this point the salespeople have the opportunity to influence the customer of which product to buy, and also to offer similar products. By questioning and listening to the customer the salespeople gain the information wanted to offer some suggestions of products (Assael, 1995). Also, previous research has shown the significant link between salespeople that listen to customers and their future intention to do business at the store (Pelham, 2009). This interaction should be used to solve the problem for the customer and then give suggestions of a product that the customer might want, according to the customer needs. Additionally, Pelham (2009) discuss in his article the importance that salespeople can solve the customers problem to reach as high customer satisfaction as possible.

### *3.5.4 Discussion of options*

Discussion is vital to have in the model, because it is important for salesperson to gain information through discussion with the customer, in order to solve the customer's problem (Assael, 1995). Also, to understand the customer in the best way it is important to listen and ask questions (Pelham, 2009). By discussing with the customer, the salesperson can evaluate the options of products he/she had in mind for the customer. In this thesis discussion of option will be defined as the verbal communication, which we refer to questioning and listening between salesperson and customer.

Questioning and listening refers to that both salesperson and the customer listen and ask questions to understand each other. After the stage of developing a sales strategy (options of product) to the customer, the salesperson probably would suggest these to the customer. It is then up to the customer to ask question to the salesperson which listen to the customer and counter ask questions to the customer. This is an important part of the

model because it is important for both parties to understand each other and give the correct information.

### *3.5.5 Adjust sales strategy*

Once the exchange of questions and answers from salesperson and customer is over, the next for the salesperson is to solve the problem for the customer. At this stage the salesperson will in theory give the customer different solutions (options) of product attempting to fulfill the need. Depending on how the salesperson behaves against the customer, the salesperson would either (1) offer a product and not asking further questions or (2) offer a product and discuss it with the customer (Assael, 1995). If the customer would not be pleased with the current offer, the salesperson then needs to develop a new sales strategy for the customer and discuss (interact) this with the customer over again, which would lead back to this stage. However, if the customer would be satisfied, the salesperson should move to the next stage of the process. It is vital to have in mind that the salespeople not always need to adjust the sales strategy. The salespeople might suggest the right product to the customer the first time. However, for this thesis the salespeople's service towards the customer is the focus and therefore this step in the process is included to get a deeper analysis in the salespersons service.

### *3.5.6 End experience*

The end experience for the customer is vital. As mentioned in the theory chapter, Chase and Dasu (2001), claim that the last memory a customer will have from the experience is the last moment of the meeting with the salesperson. Therefore, it is important for a salesperson to end the meeting with the customer in a good way. The experience for the customer can be good or bad. Though, the chance of a neutral end experience is possible. Another possibility is that the person in the checkout desk gives the last impression because it is also a service person.

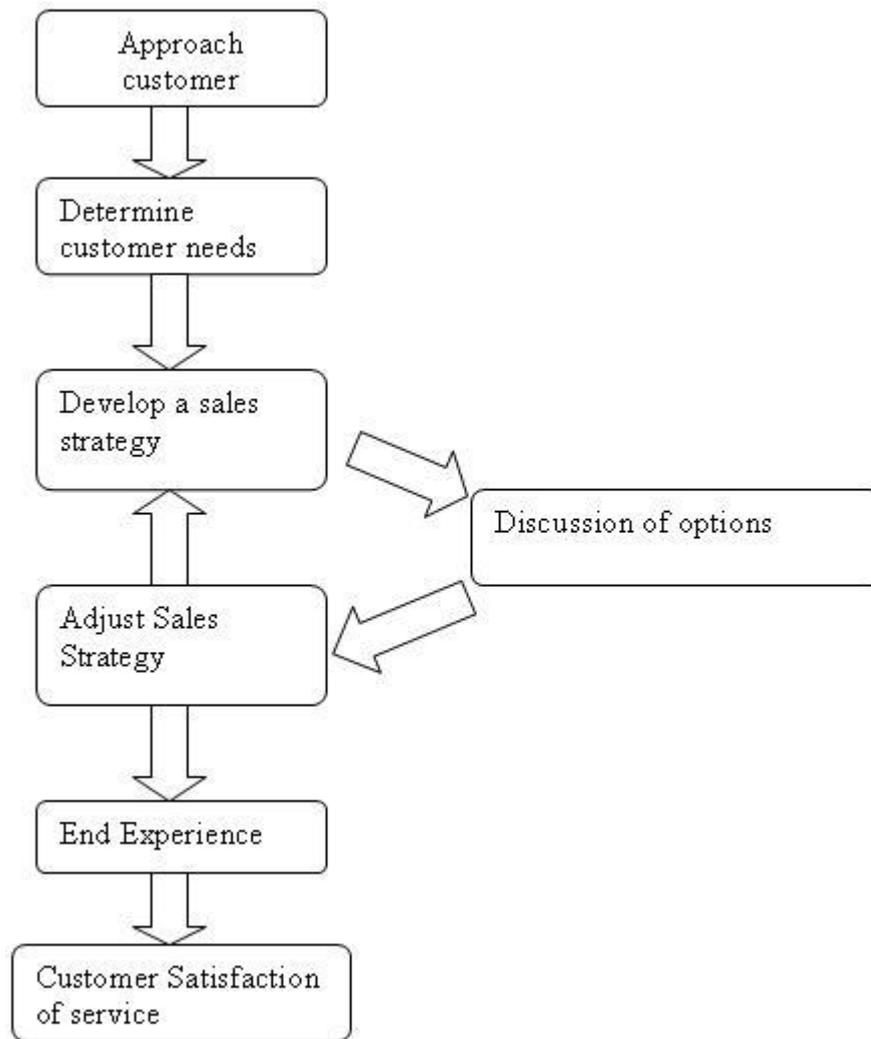
### *3.5.7 Customer satisfaction of service*

Customer satisfaction of service is referred to the whole experience of the process. If the customer have acquired the help needed and the whole experience in the store has been good, the customer should be satisfied according to theory (Kotler *et al.*, 2005) Also, if the customer is satisfied with the service in store it is more likely that the customer returns to the store and that specific salesperson. There is a possibility for companies to

gain the word-of-mouth marketing from customers by achieving satisfied customers (Assael, 1995). Therefore, it is important to achieve satisfaction of service given to the customers.

### **3.6 Summary**

The characteristics discussed above are summarized in the influence of salespersons' behavior on customer satisfaction of service-model (See figure 3.2). All the stages in the model discuss different behavior that the salesperson might have in the meeting with the customer. However, because this thesis focuses on the deeper insights of the individual salespersons behavior, we are open for new behavior that might come up during the operationalization.



*Figure 3.2 the influence of salespersons' behavior on customer satisfaction of service- Model*

## 4. Empirical method

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*In this chapter the empirical method is presented. The strategy and research design are discussed pursued by data collection, sample collection, reliability, validity and operationalization. As a final point, the generalizability is defined and discussed.*

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### 4.1 Research design and strategy

The research design has three common methods, the exploratory, descriptive and the explanatory research design. The exploratory research design aims to explore the specific nature of a problem. Two other advantage of the exploratory research is the adaptability and flexibility to change (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). However, when using the descriptive research, the goal is to reveal an accurate profile of events, persons or situations. The descriptive research can be related to both an extended version of exploratory and a piece of explanatory research design (*ibid*). The last method is the explanatory study. The explanatory design establishes relationship between studies and variables, meaning that the aim is to study situations or problems, trying to find a relationship between variables (*ibid*).

The purpose of this dissertation is to identify the salespersons' behavior which may influence the customers' satisfaction of service in a positive way. Therefore, the use of an exploratory research design is suitable.

Although the research design is important, so is the research strategy. There are several different categories such as (1) experiment, (2) survey, (3) case study, (4) action research, (5) grounded theory, (6) ethnography and (7) archival research. A more clear definition on each of them can be found in Saunders *et al.* (2009) or in other books on research methods.

This research uses the experiment design. According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), the aim for using the experiment design is to study the links between two variables. Thus, in this

dissertation, customer satisfaction of service and salespeople behavior will be referred to as the linking variables. Bryman and Bell (2007) also claim that using an experimental design gives a strong internal validity compared to casual findings.

#### **4.2 Time Horizon**

When performing a research study there are two different ways of time perspective (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). These two are cross-sectional studies and longitudinal studies. The cross-sectional study is used when studying a special phenomenon at a particular time (*ibid*). Many of the cross-sectional studies are based on interviews that are conducted under a short time. Most research studies in academic classes are automatically time controlled and are, therefore, mostly cross-sectional. Longitudinal research studies change and development (*ibid*). Also, the main question that it tries to answer is if there has been any change over time. Therefore, it is vital to study the phenomena over a longer time (*ibid*).

For this dissertation the cross-sectional time- horizon is used. The reason for using this time-horizon is that this research will study the effects between different variables at a specific point of time. Also, the time span of the study is restricted to fifteen weeks.

#### **4.3 Data collection**

According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), there are two categories of data collection. The first one is primary data collection where new data are collected. The second one is secondary data where the sources of collection are from already existing data. The secondary data collection can then be divided into sub-categories: documentary, survey based and multiple source based data (*ibid*).

This dissertation will aim for a deep understanding; therefore, the primary data collection will be our main source. The main primary data will be collected through the form of experiment. The experiment will aim towards a small group of salespeople because the time is not enough to achieve a large group, which is one of the obstacles that are discussed in Saunders *et al.* (2009). The definition of a salesperson could be different depending on which author that is writing. Mainly the definition of a salesperson is someone who regularly negotiates the price, delivery and maintenance the communication between the buyer and the seller. Even after the purchase the salespersons communicate with the buyer to see if the customer is satisfied with the product (Assael,

1995). However, in this dissertation the definition of a salesperson is someone who only works as a helping hand during the buying process. The experiment was carried out mainly through the mystery shopper method, which means that the researchers participate completely in the experiment (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The complete participant means the researcher will participate in the experiment but with concealed identity (*ibid*). The complete participant method will be applied to the data collection of salespeople.

However, if there is time left, there will be data collection through observing other customers. The objective of the observation will be complementary data for the experiment, which could strengthen the reliability of the collected data. The method used is “observer as participant” (*ibid*). Observer as participant refers to the role where the researcher would be a “spectator” (*ibid*). Participant observation has three categories: primary observations, secondary observations and experiential data. For this dissertation the primary observations will be used. Primary observations are when the researcher note what happened or what was said at the time the experiment was executed (*ibid*). The secondary observation and experiential data can further be found in Saunders *et al.* (2009).

For ethical reason (*ibid*), neither the names of the salespersons or the company names are published. Finally, the data collection in the stores was carried out during four different occasions. Meaning that we observed one occasion, mystery shopper one occasions and then we repeated the procedure.

#### **4.4 Sample selection**

The sampling techniques offer a variety of methods that helps you decrease the quantity of data that you need to collect. Instead of collecting data from all possible cases, you only need to collect from a sub-group (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). There are two different types of sampling techniques. First, there is probability or representative sampling. Second, there is non- probability or judgmental sampling. In the probability sampling the possibility for each case to be selected from the population is identified and usually equal for all cases (*ibid*). Therefore, it is possible to answer the research question and to accomplish objectives that involve you to approximately calculate the different factors statistically. Thus, probability sampling is associated with experimental and surveys research strategies (*ibid*). The non-probability sampling is the opposite. Here, the possibility for each case to be selected from the population is not known beforehand.

Also, it is impossible to answer the research question that requires you to make statistical assumptions about the different factors of the population (*ibid*). However, it is still possible to make generalizations from a non-probability sample but not on a statistical ground. In this dissertation the selected sample is three different electronic retail stores. Since we wanted to have stores that are similar in size and number of customers, three similar retail stores was chosen. Also, this dissertation uses a non-probability sample technique with a combination of a convenience sampling and a purposive sampling.

#### **4.5. Operationalization**

In this section the operationalization is presented. Operationalization is the translation of concepts into concrete indicators of their existence (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). There are two different way to measure salesperson behavior. One way is through the primary method called mystery shopper. Another way is through observations of customers and salespeople interaction. Further, the factors of the salespersons behavior discussed in the theoretical review are listed below. Also, how the different factors may affect the salespersons' behavior are measured and discussed.

##### *4.5.1 Mystery shopper as complete participant method*

In the mystery shopper method it is the researchers who act as customers. The researchers' identity will be concealed during the data collection. Further, the researcher will have specific factors that we look for and these factors will be the same as for the observations. However, new different factors may come up during the field investigation and the researcher should have an open mind to this. The researcher should also look for new factors that could be included in the research. This method aims to get a deeper understanding and also to get an insight in how the salespeople act towards the customers.

##### *4.5.2 Observations*

By observing other salespeople behavior towards the customers from a different point of view, the mystery shopper method could be strengthen. There might be other behaviors that could not be discovered during the mystery shopper method, but is easier to see during observations of other customers. To use the same criteria as in the mystery shopper method possible differentiations could be compared and analyzed.

### *1. Approach customer*

Approaching the customer and asking if the customer needs assistance is the first step to establish contact with the customer. Approaching the customer is one behavior that could be possible, but also not approaching the customer and instead wait for the customer to ask is another probable behavior. This research will measure customer needs according to salesperson's behavior towards approaching customers. It will be tested by standing and looking at a specific group of product. If no salesperson approach, attempts of trying to provoke the salespersons will be done. The first attempt, will be looking at the salesperson or towards the help desk usually found in stores to provoke the salesperson to approach us. If the first attempt fails, we need to approach the salesperson ourselves in order to continue. Approach customer is observed as when the salesperson approach the customer, smiles, make eye contact with the customer and ask if assistance is needed.

### *2. Determine customer needs*

After listening to the customers preferences, the salesperson should determine which sort of product that would suit the customer best. Here the salesperson should try to understand the customers' needs to be able to suggest a product with the right preferences. This step will be measured by determining if the salesperson asks different questions about the purpose with the product before offering an option(s).

### *3. Develop a sales strategy*

At this stage the salesperson should offer a product to the customer after the determining the needs. After determining the needs and the information gathered from the customer, the salesperson should offer a product(s) that would solve the problem of the customers. However, this stage will be determined by if the salesperson does offer a product before discussing different options with the customer, or if the salesperson skip the product offering and begin with the discussion. This step will be measured by determining if the salesperson listens to what the customers have to say and recommend one or several options of products.

### *4. Discussion of options*

This stage is probably the most crucial part for the salesperson to solve the problem for the customer. When an option(s) is presented to the customer, the salesperson now has

the opportunity to ask further question and obtain more information. This is an important part of the model because the more information the salesperson and customer receives; the higher is the probability of offering a product that matches the customer's needs. This stage will be tested by acting confused and insecure regarding the option(s) given.

One way this can be tested is by only giving the salesperson part of information to provoke them to ask further questions. Although we provoke them to ask further question, this will be done in an indirect way by acting confused about what the preferences are. The interaction occurs from the salesperson meet us to the end. This will be measured by only giving the salesperson pieces of information to see if the salesperson ask additional question during the whole meeting. By acting unsure about the product the salesperson offers, we hope to indirectly affect the salesperson to give additional information and ask additional question to offer another product almost similar to the first one. There will then be choices for us, which also gives us the chance to ask additional question and continue the conversation further to test new additional question. It is hard to hard to measure discussion of options. We will measure the discussion of options by determining if the salesperson presents advantages and disadvantages with the product. We will also look if the salesperson gives additional information about the product or ask further questions.

##### *5. Adjust sales strategy*

At this stage the salesperson will offer a different option(s) towards the first depending on the information from interaction. If it appears that the first option from the first sales strategy was sufficient to the customers need, the salesperson will offer a solution that fits better for the problem and needs of the customer. This could be done by recommend a similar product that would fit the customers' preferences better.

##### *6. End experience*

The end experience is the final stage before leaving the store and purchasing the item for a customer. Here it is the customers end experience from the salesperson that is measured. When using the mystery shopper method, we observe how the salesperson ends the conversation. The reason for this observation is that the customers' last memory will be the last thing experienced as Chase and Dasu (2001), claim. In this case the customers last memory will be how the salesperson end the conversation and meeting with us. The way the salesperson ends the conversation with the customer vary from

situation to situation. However, for this thesis a good end experience is if the salespersons do not rush away directly, but wait with the customer and also ask if there are any additional questions. The salesperson might also give the customer some sort of brochures with the information about the products. Another way could be if the salesperson gives some personal insights about the product or a special offer to the customer. Because this study is done by the researcher it is also the researchers own satisfaction that is measured.

#### *7. Customer satisfaction of service*

Satisfaction is subjective and difficult to measure. Because of that, we have decided to measure the satisfaction of service by using a scale from zero to six (0-6). Thus, it is measured with the six factors used in the model. If the salesperson fulfils only one of the six measured factors, then the satisfaction would be low (1 of 6). However, if the salesperson would fulfill six of the factors, then it would be a higher satisfaction (6 of 6). The points on each of the factors will be given 0-1. The reason for the 0-1 scale is because we will be doing both mystery shopping and observations at two different occasions. If the store only fulfills the factor in one of the two occasions during measurement, the point awarded will be 0.5.

During the empirical data collection there might be other factors discovered, which could also influence the satisfaction of the service.

#### **4.6 Reliability**

It is important to consider how well the reliability of the findings is performed. It can also be explained as if another researcher would have performed the same test again at a different time would the results be the same? Depending to which extent the data collection techniques and analysis procedures will be consistent with the findings, the reliability will differ (Saunders et al., 2009).

According to Saunders *et al.*, (2009) there are four threats to reliability. The first threat is subject or participant error, which is a factor that might give different results depending on what time or mindset the participating people has. The second threat is subject or participant bias this is when the participants' answers the question like they think the

researcher wants to. The third threat is observer bias which deals with the problem that the result may be conflicting because the answers have been interpreted by many researchers who has collected the data.

Even though the identity of the researchers are concealed, the subject or participant error might affect the results. The reason for the error is that mystery shopper and observations are very subjective methods. Because of the individual opinion in each observer, there is bias to be only two or less observers. Finally, the research measurement proves low reliability because an experiment is highly subjective. The results will depend on the researchers' personalities and the way to talk to the salesperson.

#### **4.7 Validity**

Validity focuses on the findings, whether the relationship between two variables measures the correct concepts (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). According to Gharui and Grønhaug (2002), there are four different types of validity for qualitative research. These four types of validity are descriptive, interpretative, theoretical and generalizable validity. For our dissertation we believe the interpretative and generalizable validity relevant. Interpretative validity refers to how good the interpretation is, which in this case refers to how interpretation is done between researchers. Because there are two researchers, we will discuss the interpretation of each individual between each other. Therefore, this gives the thesis more validity. Generalizable validity refers to what extent the findings can be generalized (Gharui and Grønhaug, 2002). All salespeople behave individual. Therefore, it might not be able to generalize our results. However, there is possibility of common behaviors between salespeople.

Because the collection of data will come from participant observations, it requires high ecological validity. Ecological validity refers to the degree which the findings can be generalised to all relevant contexts. The reason for the high ecological validity is because the participant observation involves studies in social phenomena in their natural environment (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The validity could be threatened by the researchers; hence, the concealed identity of the mystery shopper method terminates the threat. Also, by executing the study in the natural environment validity is higher than if it would be conducted in a created environment.

#### **4.8 Generalizability**

According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), generalisability is often referred to as external validity. Saunders *et al.*, (2009) claims, that researcher must have in mind if the research result are whether generalisable or not. Meaning that, if the result whether or not are applicable to other research settings similar to this.

This dissertation uses an abductive approach and because of the small sample of individuals, the result cannot be generalized. If the research is not generalisable, the contribution to the scientific world would be insignificant or limited. However, the study can provide analytical generalizations, which refers to providing new insight on the link between concepts. As mentioned before, this thesis involves individuals from the electric retail stores in the Swedish market. Thus, if another study is carried out in the same area, the result might vary. The reason for the variation of result depends mainly on salesperson and participants, meaning that every individual is different and the result will also vary because of these differences.

## 5. Empirical findings and analysis

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*This chapter consists of four sections: introduction, experiment data, observation data and lastly a summary of analysis.*

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### 5.1 Complete participant/ Mystery shoppers

In this chapter the different data collection will be presented and analyzed. First, the sample is discussed. Later, the results for the experiment and the observations will be presented and also discussed. Lastly, a sectional analysis will be presented.

In this research, the stores are selected by size and market share in the area of and near Kristianstad. There are three major electronic retail chain stores in the area; also nearby cities has the same electronic chain stores. Because these three are the major chains, these were chosen for our experiment.

In this part we will present the results collected through the mystery shopper method. This was done twice at different departments such as computer, cell phone and television, to determine a more accurate finding. Therefore the results will be presented in two parts.

#### 5.1.1 Part one of mystery shoppers

##### Store A

At company A we had to wait an incredibly long time, approximately thirteen minutes before we got any help from a salesperson. Also, a queue ticket was needed even though there were no other customers at the same department. Even after the queue ticket was taken it took about five more minutes before the salesperson came. When the salesperson arrived he smiled a little bit and directly made eye contact with us. He asked us what he could help us with and if we were looking for something specific. However, after that he did not ask us any other questions about our need. The salesperson informed us about the difference between the different sizes of the computers and what they should be used for. Further, the salesperson directly recommended a so called “best seller” among the computers. However, because the salesperson did not ask what we really wanted the product did not suit our needs. After showing us the product the salespeople presented the

advantages with the specific product. However, he did not present the disadvantages with it. The salesperson focused on this specific product during the whole process. He also presented some additional functions about the specific product such as a remote control and a card reader that the other products did not have. After we got all the information about the product and said that we were not sure, he did not suggest any other options. Instead, he told us that the recommended product was the best option. At the end of the conversation he did not give us any special offer. However, he did come with some personal insights saying that the recommended product according to him was the best product on the market. Before we left the salesperson gave us a product brochure so that we could look at the products again at home before we made a choice. Our last impression of the salesperson and the conversation was that the salesperson seemed a little bit stressed and he rushed away at the same time as he said goodbye to us.

### Store B

When we entered store B, the first salesperson at the entrance greets us with a smile. However, we did not stop at this salesperson section. We continued to walk over to the computer section. When we arrived at the computer section, we could notice that there were three other customers looking at the computers. However, there were no salespersons helping any of these customers at that moment. We continued to wait for about 10-15 min without any salesperson approaching us, even though we made clear that they could see us. By this time the other customers were already gone and there were two new customers looking at laptops. We decided to find a salesperson and approach the salesperson ourselves in order to continue our research in this store. The salesperson smiled and said hello once we approached the help desk, which every section in the store has. However, we needed to ask for help before this salesperson asked what sort of product we needed help with.

Once we told him what sort of product we were interested in the salesperson started to ask question of what the purpose of the computer was, before reaching the shelves with computers. After arriving to the shelves of computers, he asked additional question what else we would use it for and what price range we had thought of. Even though we acted confused with no clue on what price range we had in mind, the salesperson recommended a computer what he called “solid, well-balanced, reliable and a computer that meets your requirement”. We looked a little on the computer while he presented it. Another

salesperson (b) walked by while he was talking about the computer, the salesperson (a) that was serving us quickly asked the other salesperson (b) what he thought of it and described briefly what our needs was to the second salesperson (b). The other salesperson (b) that was walking by thought for some seconds and recommended another computer in addition to the one we were already looking at and then continued with what he was doing. The salesperson (a) that was helping us looked at the other computer and said that the salesperson (b) that walked by was right, the other computer would also meet our requirements. The salesperson (a) claimed that the second computer had some additional functions that would be fun to have.

The salesperson did not mention the advantages and disadvantages about the computers; he did compare the machines though. In the end he recommended the second mentioned computer that was both cheaper and had a special function (touch-screen). The salesperson did not give any personal insights. However, the salesperson gave us a good offer on the antivirus protection program for half the price if we bought computers from their store. We told him that we would like to think about it to end the conversation. The salesperson was more calm and relaxed than the salesperson from store A. The salesperson ended the conversation with a smile and said that we should think about it and we were welcome to come back. He also stood still and smiled until we began to walk away before he went back to the help desk.

### Store C

At store C the salesperson came to us with a smile and looked us in the eye. It also only took about seven minutes before he came. He started by asking us if we were looking for something special. Further, he presented the products that we were interested in. After the presentation he asked us different questions about the usage and tried to find out what we needed and our purpose with the computer. He was very good at listening to us so that he would be able to recommend the best product for us. After this the salesperson said that he would recommend two different products that would suit our needs. He presented the advantages with the two products and also the disadvantages with the products. At that time he compared the two different products that were recommended. Also, the salesperson informed us about additional functions to the different products. For one of the recommended products there was a remote and also a possibility to buy a docking station as well. The salesperson did not have to suggest any new options because he had

already presented two options for us according to our needs. At the end the salesperson told us about their offer on antivirus that we could get for half price. The salesperson also came with some interesting personal insights about the heat issue with the HP computer that he had some experience from of himself. Also, he said which computer he thought would suit us the best. From this store we think we got the best ending. The salesperson made a conclusion of what he had told us and briefly discussed the advantages and disadvantages about the products once again. He also told us that we could think about it and said we were welcome to come back. As a final impression the salesperson waited with us if we would have any further questions and he also thanked us for coming.

#### 5.1.2 Part two of mystery shoppers

##### Store A

Because of the lack of salespeople from this store, only one observation was done. In general, the store had some customers, but the lack of salespeople in the store made people leave without getting any help.

##### Store B

The second time as mystery shoppers in store B we started out in the cell phone department. There were two salespeople, both occupied, when we came there, another customer were looking at a product. However, this customer left after waiting for approximately 15 minutes. We noticed that the salespeople spent much time with other customer. We tried to get another salesperson in another section since the salespeople in the cell phone section seemed to not be able to solve the problem for the customer. We went to the camera section since there was a salesperson that was free. However, to our surprise, we then received help from another salesperson that was walking by. The salesperson gave us direct eye contact and asked if we needed any assistance. He also asked if there was any specific camera we had been looking at.

After determining that we needed a camera, he only asked one follow up question. That was what price range we have been thinking of. This salesperson never asked us what the purpose of the camera was for. However, he did recommend a camera which was on a special deal for that week. The salesperson did not give us any advantages or disadvantages of the product, although, the salesperson did compare the differences between the cheap, medium and expensive products. The salesperson did not give any

information of additional functions or any similar products. He also did not give any special offer or personal insights. The ending of the conversation was like every other, “welcome back and you are welcome to ask any questions”. Overall the salesperson seemed quite stressed out and in a hurry.

### Store C

When we entered the last store, store C, the first impression was that there was barely any customers. We went straight to the TV section where there was a salesperson. We could not conduct our research in any other sections since there were no salespersons. It took about 10 minutes before the salesperson approached us with a smile and eye contact. He asked if there was anything specific we needed help with and asked us for what purpose we needed the TV. During the start of our conversation a woman approached us and asked the salesperson if there were more salespeople in the store. There was a lack of salespeople in the store at that particular time.

When the women left, the salesperson asked additional follow up questions. There were many questions, such as price range and purpose and if we watched sports, if we were thinking of connecting the computer and what other devices we had at home. After determining approximately what sort of TV that would suite us, he recommended the Samsung brand. However, he did not recommend any specific TV of that brand because we said that we did not know about the price range. He also explained the advantages and disadvantages of the Samsung and compared it to other brands. The disadvantages were all on the competitor brands and not on the Samsung. We decided to choose two options of the brand and before we asked for them, he told us the additional functions the TV had. He did not recommend any similar product from competitors since he claimed the picture was worse on the other TVs and we told him in the beginning that the picture and resolution of the TV was very important.

Even though he did not give any offer or personal insights, the salesperson ended the conversation in a good way. He summed up what was said and asked if there were any other question regarding the products or any other products in the store. He also stayed with us for a couple of minutes before leaving us to think about it.

### 5.1.3 Experiment/ Mystery shopper analysis

The following text presents the analysis of the mystery shopper method. The twelve defined sales criteria are analyzed and discussed.

#### *Smiles and make eye contact*

In all three stores the salespersons smiled and had eye contact with us. This behavior could be explained as that the salespersons want to show the customers that they have noticed them and will help them. Another option could be that when the salespersons started to work, one thing the bosses bring up was to smile at all customers.

#### *Approach the customer and ask if assistance is needed*

From what we have discovered in our data collection is that all of the stores tested have help desks. However, store (A) has a queue ticket system in the store, while store (B) and (C) are using a help desk system. Hence, if customer needs help in store (A), the customer can take a ticket and then continue to look at the products while the customer in (B) and (C) needs to stand in line in order to get help. We believe that the salespersons did not approach us in store (A) and (B) because the salespersons have formed their behavior of approach after the learned system. However, even though store (C) has help desk, the salesperson approaches the customer. It is possible that the salesperson approached us in store (C) because of another approach behavior. As mentioned before, the behavior depends on the individual salesperson. Another factor that could have affected the approach is that both in stores (A) and (B), there were many product shelves all around. The (C) store, where the salesperson approached us, was designed with much open space and low product shelves so it was easy for the salesperson to see every customer in the store, even though the store covered a large area.

#### *Follow up questions*

In store (B) and (C) the salespersons asked us different follow-up questions to be able to suggest the right product according to our needs. However, in store (A) the salesperson did not ask us any questions but instead directly recommend a product. The reason for this behavior could be individual behavior, maybe the salespersons are shy or want to focus on a possible campaign the company might have at the moment to make the customer buy that certain product. However, this technique does not focus on the customers' needs.

### *Listening and recommendation*

We found that some of the salespersons do listen to our purpose and recommend a product after that. However, in the first store (A), the salesperson did not listen at all. This salesperson only recommended a computer that was what he called “best-seller” and it was the best for all-around use. The behavior of the salesperson in store (A) differs from the behavior of the salespersons of stores (B) and (C). In stores (B) and (C), the salespeople listened carefully and both asked additional follow-up questions before recommending a product. One of the reasons why one of the salespersons did not listen can be that the competencies of the salesperson are not sufficient. Another reason that could affect the salesperson’s listening and recommendation of product is that the salesperson is new on the job. Based on the findings, we believe that most of the salesperson would ask follow up questions and then come up with recommendations, like the salespeople in store (B) and (C).

### *Advantages and disadvantages of the product*

At store (A) the salesperson only presented the advantages with the product. In store (B) the salespersons did not mentioned any advantages or disadvantages with the product at all. In store (C) the salespeople presented both the advantages and the disadvantages. One reason to why salespeople do not want to present the disadvantages with the product could be that they think it would frighten the customers.

### *Additional functions of the product*

Both the (A) and (C) stores informed about additional functions in the products. However the (B) store did not mention as much as the other two did.

### *Recommend similar product*

In store A the salesperson recommended a so called best seller to us. However, he did not recommend any similar product after that when we continued to be confused. The salesperson was strongly determined that the product recommended was the best.

The first time in store B the salesperson recommended us a similar product after discussing it with another salesperson. However, the second time the salesperson did not

recommend any similar product. At that time the salesperson only compared two products with each other.

In store C the salesperson did not recommend any similar product to us, he just compared the two recommended products with each other. The second time at the store the salesperson only recommended a brand for us, not any specific products.

#### *Special offer, personal insights*

In Store A the salesperson gave his personal insights about what product he thought was the best. The salesperson also gave us a product brochure to take home so that we could look at the different product once again at home.

The first time in store B the salesperson did not give us any personal insights. However, the salesperson did give us a special offer of antivirus for half the price. The second time the salesperson did not give us any personal insights or special offer.

At store C we got very good personal insights from the salesperson, who told us about the heat issue that one of the computers were well-known for. Also, the salesperson did have the problem himself. The salesperson did not give us any special offer. The second time we were there we did not get any personal insights or special offer.

#### *End experience, last impression*

Our end experience in store A was that the salesperson seemed quite stressed and walked away at the same time he said goodbye to us. However, the salesperson had a friendly tone and welcomed us to the store again.

In store B the salesperson was calm during the whole time and at the end he welcomed us to the store again. Also, the salesperson waited with us until we began to walk away from. The second time the salesperson seemed a bit stressed during the whole process. As if the salesperson was going somewhere. However, the salesperson was very nice and friendly.

The first time in store C the salesperson acted in a very good way. He summarized all the information that we got earlier. Also, the salesperson had a focus on the advantages and disadvantages of the recommended products. Accordingly, the salesperson asked us if we had any further questions. At the end the salesperson thanked us for coming and welcomed us again. After that the salesperson stayed at the place until we had left before

the salesperson went. The second time the salesperson acted in a similar way. Both salespersons were very nice and seemed to enjoy their job and helping customers.

#### 5.1.4 Summary of mystery shoppers

The following table and text is a summary of mystery shopper and a short summary of two behaviors that were not included in our model.

Table 5.1 Summary of mystery shoppers table

	Approach customer	Determine customer needs	Develop a sales strategy	Discussion of options	Adjust sales strategy	End experience	Total number of satisfaction of service
Store A	0.5	0	1	0	0	0	1.5
Store B	1	0.5	1	0	0.5	0.5	3.5
Store C	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

#### *Approach customer*

In all three stores the salespeople made eye contact and smiled to the customer. Also, the salespeople approached the customer. However, in store (A) it took very long time before the salesperson came. Therefore, store (A) only receives 0.5 points in approach customer stage. The reason to why store (B) was rewarded with 1 point even though we had to ask the salesperson for help the first time is that the second time the salesperson approached us and all the other salespeople greeted us.

#### *Determine customer needs*

In store A the salesperson did not ask any follow up questions to the customer; therefore it did not get any points. In store (B) only one of the salespeople asked follow-up questions, therefore store (B) only received 0.5 points. In store (C) the salesperson asked many questions to be sure he fully knew what the customer wanted. That is the reason to why store C was rewarded with 1 point.

#### *Develop a sales strategy*

In all the stores the salesperson listened and recommended a product to the customer. That is why they all got 1 point.

### *Discussion of options*

The salespeople's interaction with the customer differs a lot from store to store. In store A and B the salespeople did not present the disadvantages or the advantages with the product. Also, the salespeople did not inform about any additional functions of the products. Therefore, they did not get any points. In store C the salespeople presented both the advantages and the disadvantages with the specific product. Also, information about additional functions of the product was presented. Therefore, the store got 1 point.

### *Adjust the sales strategy*

In store A the salesperson did not adjust the sale strategy by recommending a similar product that would fit the customers' preferences. That is why it did not get any points. In store B the salesperson did recommend a similar product one of the two times. That is the reason for getting 0.5 points. In store C the salesperson did recommend a similar product both the times and therefore got 1 point.

### *End experience*

The end experience of the service in store is extremely important. In store A the salesperson rushed away at the same time as saying goodbye. Also, the salesperson did not give any personal insights or a special offer and, therefore, it did not receive any points. One of the two times in store B, we had a very good end experience because we received personal insights and a special offer from the salesperson. However, the second time the salesperson did not give any personal insights or special offer and therefore it got 0.5 points. In store C the end experience was very good; by this the intention is that both times the salesperson gave personal insights and a special offer. That is why it got 1 point.

### *New behaviors*

We found that both times, salespeople compared the products. Also that some of the salespeople gave general information of the category of product which the customer was interested in. Therefore, we believe that these behaviors should be included in the thesis.

Table 5.2 Findings of possible new behaviors (Mystery shopping)

	Compare products	Give general information
Store A	1	1
Store B	1	1
Store C	1	1

In all three stores they both compared the products and gave general information about the products to the customer during both mystery shopping visits.

## 5.2 Observations data

In the following text the results of the observations is presented. Because the data collection was collected twice the results are divided into two parts. The focus here is the same as in mystery shopper method. The observations were made with our model (see figure 3.2, p31.) in mind and the different factors as starting point but with an open mind for new possible behaviors.

### 5.2.1 Result of the observations – part 1

#### General

General impressions of the three companies are that we found company B had more customers than company A and C. In company B, the salespeople were more active than the salespeople from A and C.

#### Store A

When entering store A, the first impression is that there is not many customers at all. Thus, there are not many salespeople out on the floor either. After a while looking around we found that there were some customers around some of the sections of the store. However, the salespeople did not approach any customers on any of the section of the store until the customers took a queue ticket. The salespeople smiled and had eye contact with the customers but did not approach until the customers asked for help. We also noticed that the salesperson did not suggest any other products that might be interested for the customer except for the first one mentioned.

According to us the end experience is really good for the customers, and it might even be one of the best in this study. The reason to why we think it is so excellent is because in the end when a customer buys a product, the salespeople follow the customer all the way to the cash desk. If the product is big or heavy, the salespeople even follow the customers out to their cars and help them load it into the car.

### Store B

When we first enter the store, the first section with cell phone is located right at the entrance. The first impression from the first salesperson we saw is that he smiles, makes eye contact and welcomes us to the store. Compared to the other stores, this store had many customers in most of the departments.

The first customer and salesperson interaction observed was really great compared to the company A and C. The salespeople in this store actually approaches the customers and ask if the customer needs assistance with anything. The salesperson from the observation asks many questions and listens to the customers. We also observed that only two out of three (2/3) departments bring up the negative issues with the product. However, all departments bring up the positive issues with the product. Additional function was only given to customers in one department. When the customers have been giving a recommendation of a product, the salespeople will give them a similar product as an option. When there were two options for the customer to choose between, the salespeople compared those to each other.

There was a special offer at the time of this observation, which offered the customers to buy antivirus protection for half the price. Also, personal insight was given from all the salespeople observed. The last impression from all of the salespeople in the store was good because all the salespeople were calm before moving on to the next customer at the end of the interaction. We could not follow each customer to the end since most of the customers bought products which means that customers followed the salespeople to the desk, which is the place the sale is registered before paying.

### Store C

Compared to store A and B, this store was almost empty. There was only a few customers and even less salespeople out on the floor. There were no salespeople at all the first 5 minutes in the store. However, two salespeople came out after 5 minutes but did not

approach us or the other few customers they had. The impression of the salespeople was that they were inactive people standing at the desk without anything to do.

The salespeople told the customer both disadvantages and advantages about products.

### *5.2.2 Results of Observations – part 2*

#### Store A

It seems like that store A in general has a lower customer ratio per day. The impression when entering the store this time was that there was a lack of salesperson compared to the few customers the store had. We also noticed that the salesperson does not approach the customers before a queue ticket was taken by the customers.

We approach the mobile section where there was a customer waiting already. We waited for a salesperson to approach the customer. A smile and eye contact was given from one of the salesperson walking towards the customer. He asked the customer what he could assist her with and if there was anything specific she was looking at. However, this observation differs from most of the others. The customer of this observation already knew what she needed and there were no direct follow up questions since she made it so clear what she needed. The salesperson listens carefully and recommended a product after the customer's preferences.

The salesperson did not mention any advantages or disadvantages, he did not compare the product to another or inform about additional functions. The customer said that she was not satisfied with the suggested mobile phone and wanted someone with bigger buttons and a lower price. The salesperson told her to wait a moment. After 5 minutes the salesperson came back and had 3 different other options to offer the customer. After the customer's decision, the salesperson agreed to follow her to the check out desk and help her get started with the phone.

#### Store B

This time, the observation was conducted at the computer section. The salesperson gave the customer a smile and eye contact. He asked if there were anything he could assist her with. She said that she was going to buy a computer to her son. He then asked if there

were any specific requirements the computer was for. He listened to what she had to say and asked additional follow up question before recommending a computer to her.

Even though he recommended a computer to her, she was unsure about the pick. The salesperson asked a lot of follow up questions and determined that his suggestion of computer was probably the right one for the needs. The salesperson explained why and what difference it was between the more expensive computers and the less expensive computers. He also compared the different computers by giving examples of what was normally used for the computers in the cheap, medium and expensive computers.

During the whole time the salesperson smiled at the customer and he also gave the customer information about additional functions. He did not give any personal insight but he offered half the price for antivirus program. The ending of the conversation was good; he asked if the customer needed anything else to the computer, accessories, screen or adapters of any kind. He also carried the box for the customer.

### Store C

The lack of customer made it hard to conduct observations from the beginning of the interaction with customers in the store. However, we did notice that the salespeople compared two products to each other and also discussed the advantages and disadvantages about the product in the kitchen section.

### *5.2.3 Summary of observations*

In the following context, a summary of the observation will be presented in table 5.3 and possible new behaviors will be presented which was also mentioned in the part of mystery shopper.

*Table 5.3 Summary of observations*

	<b>Approach customer</b>	<b>Determine customer needs</b>	<b>Develop a sales strategy</b>	<b>Discussion of options</b>	<b>Adjust sales strategy</b>	<b>End experience</b>	<b>Total number of satisfaction of service</b>
<b>Store A</b>	0.5	0	1	0	0.5	0.5	<b>3</b>
<b>Store B</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	<b>6</b>
<b>Store C</b>	1	X	1	0.5	X	1	<b>3.5</b>

From what was observed, we found that only store B and C approaches their customer when there are large or small amount of customers. Store A required a queue ticket in order to get help. However, even if customers took a queue ticket and there was no one else in line, it took time before the salesperson came and help the customer. Thus, store A was given only 0.5 point and store B and C was given 1 point each.

As mentioned before, determine customer needs is referred to if the salesperson asks follow up questions. From what we could observe, only store B asked follow up questions. Store A did not ask any follow up question at all, thus the 0 point. Store C was not observable since the lack of customers every time we have been in the store. Therefore, an X was given to store C as a mark for no observation done.

All salespeople in the three stores got one point in develop a sales strategy factor. We gave all of them one because we found that all the salespeople listened more or less carefully to the customers. In most cases, the salespeople recommended a product after they have listened to the customer. However, in some cases, we found that the salesperson did ask additional question after listening to what the customer had to say, before recommending a product.

Interaction is hard to determine, since interaction usually occurs during the whole conversation. However, we are determining after our criteria. Store A got zero points since they did not mention any additional functions of the product, neither did they mention the advantages or disadvantages about the product. In store B, the salespeople always mentioned the advantages and disadvantages. We also found that most of the salespeople in all three stores compare the suggested products with similar products. In store C, we found that they also compare and both advantages and disadvantages were presented. However, the lack of customers determined our decision to give the store 0.5 points, also that we could not follow the customers from the beginning was another reason to not give it 1 point.

Adjusting the sales strategy refers to suggesting a similar product to the first option. We gave store A 0.5 points because of the second observation that was done. We observed that one of the salesperson in the store gave very good options for the customer. After the first suggestion, the salesperson came back after a discussion with the customer, with

three different similar products. Store B got 1 point because of the suggestion of similar products the salespeople gave to the customers. All of the salespeople observed gave several options for the customer to choose from; some of them even changed their suggestion. The last store, C, got an X because it was not enough customers to follow in order to determine if they would offer a similar product to the first option.

During the last experience of the store, we found that salespeople in store A were in a hurry generally compared to the other two stores. However, we also noticed that this was the only store that the salespeople followed the customer to the cash desk and helped the customer with loading the product in to the cars. Thus, the 0.5 point was given to store A. In store B we found that the salespeople were calmer than store A. From what we could observe was that salespeople did not offer help to load the product in to the car. However, the salespeople carried the product to the customer to the cash desk. Therefore, store B was given 1 point. The last store, C, got 1 point because of the salespeople's patience. The salespeople in the store was very calm compared to A and B. The salespeople stood with the customer a moment and waited for additional questions from the customers. The salespeople did not go away until the customer thanked them for the assistance, also the salespeople asks their customers if there is any other questions regarding other products. Thus, we gave store C 1 point.

As mentioned before in the mystery shopper part, we also found that some salespeople compared products and gave general information about the product category the customer was interested in. Therefore, we will have this included in order to compare later in the analysis.

*Table 5.4 Possible new behaviors (Observations)*

	<b>Compare products</b>	<b>Give general information</b>
<b>Store A</b>	0	0
<b>Store B</b>	1	1
<b>Store C</b>	0.5	X

During the observation in store A we found that the salespeople in the store neither gave general information nor compared products between. Store B was opposite compared to store A. Store B compared products between each other. Before the salespeople in store B recommend a product to the customer, the salespeople gives general information about the product category. Store C was harder to observe on these behaviors, hence the lack of customers. However, we found that during one of the observation the salesperson compared the products, thus the 0.5 point given. We could not determine if the salespeople gave general information about the product category since we could not observe any customers from the beginning of the interaction.

### **5.3 Analysis of findings**

In the analysis, we seek to find common and critical behaviors for customer satisfaction of service. This is done by summarizing the points of each behavior vertical in a table. The total sum of the points for each behavior will show which of the behaviors we found that is critical and common for positive customer experience of service. When summarizing points vertical in a table, in some sense we are attempting to find common trends. Even if we find common trends, one must have in mind that behaviors depends on the individual salesperson. Therefore, we cannot generalize even if we find common trends.

Following table (table 5.5), shows the six factors from our model and the two new behaviors we discovered during the field study.

Table 5.5 Summary of Mystery shopper and Observations

<b>Mystery shopper</b>	Approach customer	Determine customer needs	Give general information	Develop a sales strategy	Compare products	Discussion of options	Adjust sales strategy	End experience
Store A	0.5	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Store B	1	0.5	1	1	1	0	0.5	0.5
Store C	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Observations</b>								
Store A	0.5	0	0	1	0	0	0.5	0.5
Store B	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Store C	1	X	X	1	0.5	0.5	X	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5/6</b>	<b>2.5/6</b>	<b>4/6</b>	<b>6/6</b>	<b>4.5/6</b>	<b>2.5/6</b>	<b>3/6</b>	<b>4/6</b>

### 5.3.1 Approach customer

The first factor in the model “the influence of salesperson behavior of customer satisfaction of service” is approach customers. The total points of salesperson behavior according to the approach customers in the different stores in the research are 5/6. Also, there were no difference between the two methods, mystery shopper and observation. Both the methods received the same results. The reason to why the results were the same could be that approaching customers are relatively easy for the salesperson to do. Here the research focus was on whether the salesperson approached the customer and made eye contact or not. The result can be connected to Maslow’s Theory of Motivation. The connection to Maslow’s theory is the importance of salespeople to determine if the customer has some kind of motivation of need. Therefore, in order to determine if there is a motivation of need, the salesperson needs to approach the customer. The Five Stage Model could also be used here, to determine if the customer is searching for information.

As mentioned before, there is not much difference in the findings of the observations and the experiment. According to the results the salespeople in store A do not approach the customer which we believe is because of the stores queue ticket system. In store B we found that the salespeople did not approach us one of the two occasions of the experiment, hence the 0.5 point. However, during our observation we found that salespeople were more active and approached customers as soon as they were free to

help. In store C we found that even though it took time, the salespeople did approach us. However, because of the lack of customers, we could not observe if the salespeople actually approach the other customers.

This behavior is essential, because it is important that the salesperson do approach the customer. Also, it is a critical behavior for the salesperson according to the results (5/6).

### 5.3.2 Determine customer needs

In the model “the influence of salesperson behavior of customer satisfaction of service” the second stage is determine customer needs. Here it is important that the salespeople ask different questions about the customer and what the customer wants in order to receive and provide information to the customer, which could be referred back to information search in the Five Stage Model. Therefore, information about the customer’s usage of the product is vital for the salespeople to know to be able to recommend a suitable option for the customer. According to Maslow’s Theory of Motivation, the salespeople should determine the customer needs in order to recommend the best product for the customer. The salespeople must know in which stage the customer is. The results from the research (2.5 /6) shows that most of the salespeople did not ask any follow up questions to the customers. The reason to this result could be that the salespeople do not think it is necessary to know what the customer’s preferences are. The salespeople probably think it is enough to only present the different products so that the customer can choose the right product by him/herself. However, this argument is not acceptable because the customers do not always know which option that would suit their preferences. Also, because the customers not always have the knowledge about the different product and what capacity that is best to have among the different options it is better if the salespeople would have helped the customer with this. Also, this critical behavior does not seem to be common among the salespeople. Another reason could be that salespeople believe that it is easier to adjust the sales strategy, rather than asking many questions.

### 5.3.3 Develop sales strategy

As seen on the *table 5.5* above, we found that all the salespeople are good listeners. Almost all recommends a product. However, there are a few salespeople that do recommend a specific brand instead of a specific product. We believe that salespeople recommend a brand instead of a product when the customer does not give enough

information about what the customer wants. Recommendation of brand could also be triggered in the beginning of the interaction, when the customer has said what he or she is interested in and the salesperson begins with giving general information about all brands they have in that product category.

The behavior is possibly a common behavior for all salespeople. Therefore, we believe that it must be seen as an important behavior for salespeople. The Customer-Salesperson Communication model applies to all interaction between customer and salespeople. Assael (1995) does not specify for which sort of business the model applies for, therefore we conclude that the model applies to all sort of business. We believe that the step “develop a sales strategy” from the Customer-Salesperson Communication Model applies to the organizations lowest business level, the salespeople.

#### 5.3.4 Discussion of options

The fourth step in the model is the discussion of options. Here it was controlled if the salespeople presented the advantages and disadvantages with the recommended product and told the customer about additional functions of the product. The results for the interaction part of the model were 2.5 of 6. The reason to why the result is so low could be that the salesperson was stressed at the moment, which was observed. Another reason could be that the salesperson compared the product with each other and therefore did not have to present the advantages and disadvantages because it was already done when comparing the products. A third reason could be that the salespeople interact and discuss with the customer during the whole buying process, and therefore do not present advantages and disadvantages with the product because of the earlier discussion with the customer. The Word of Mouth theory is used to deliver the sales strategy to the customer and to see how the customer responds to that. We believe that this critical behavior does not really fit the salespeople behavior towards the customers end experience of service. Instead we think that comparing products is a better behavior to use and is also more common.

#### 5.3.5 Adjust sales strategy

Through the research we only found half of the salespeople adjust their sales strategy to customers, meaning that only half of the salespeople did recommend another product from the first suggestion. According to the Customer-Salesperson communication model from Assael (1995), our findings are very applicable to his model. We believe this

because adjusting the product recommendation requires that the first suggested product do not fit to the customer's preferences. However, it is possible for a salesperson to determine a customer's preferences if the salesperson asks enough follow up question. Another reason could be that the customer already knows what he/she wants and inform the salesperson about the purpose of the product or other information that would help the salesperson to directly determine which product that suits the customer.

There is another possible reason that could affect the adjustment of sales strategy, the range of products. The range of product can affect the adjustment of the sales strategy, because there might not be enough products for the salesperson to select from. If there are not enough products for the salesperson to select from, the salesperson would probably choose the product closest to the customer's preference. We believe that this behavior is not that common among salespeople.

### 5.3.6 End experience

End experience got 4/6 points overall in our research. We believe that all of the three stores have their own way of giving a great end experience. We are not sure if the stores have in mind to give a good end experience. However, we do believe that the theory from Chase and Dasu (2001) does apply to our model. However, salespeople following customers to the cash desk only apply to when a customer buy an expensive product, which we refer to everything above 1000 SEK or when the product(s) requires heavy lifting. It is possible that the salespeople or the store manager has thought about the well-being of the customer in order to offer the customer a good end experience. The feeling well-being was mentioned before in the theory chapter (Pizam and Ellis, 1999).

There could be different reason why store A differs from the other two with their end-experience. The first reason is that during the field study we could notice that store A did not have many of their packages of products out in the store, meaning that the customers need to ask a salesperson in order to buy the product. However, in store B and C, we noticed that customers that wanted to buy a product could just pick up a box for themselves and walk to the cash desk. This could be a security question for the store, which requires that salespeople in store A needs to follow the customer to the cash desk. Though, following the customer to the cash-desk could be a behavior if the thoughts above are incorrect.

There could be another reason, the store manager is well aware of customer satisfaction of service and might have the thoughts like Chase and Dasu (2001) in their theory about last memories of an experience. Therefore, the store manager might have set up a rule about to follow the customer to the cash desk. Pizam and Ellis (1999) mentioned well-being of customers. There are different ways to achieve a positive end-experience, well-being is one of them. It is highly individually for customers what well-being is, some may want the salesperson to follow the customer to the cash desk. Other customers might want the salesperson to behave in a certain way before ending the discussion. Either way it depends highly on the individual customer, but both mentioned behavior could lead to the feeling of well-being, more or less in some means.

To offer a positive end experience seems like a common pattern among salespeople. However, the behaviors are highly individual and we cannot generalize that all salespeople aims to offer a positive end experience for the customer. Some salespeople might not have in mind to offer a positive experience.

#### 5.3.7 Compare products

In all three stores a new behavior among the salespeople was observed. This new behavior was to compare different products with each other to find the most suitable for the customer. The result for this behavior was 4.5 of 6. An explanation to why this behavior got so high results could be that many salespeople find it easy to compare different products with each other to highlight the product that suits the customer best. Instead of only showing one product and talk about that, the salesperson can recommend more options to the customer and compared them so the customer easier can understand the difference. Because this seems to be a rather common pattern for salespeople this might have a positive effect on the customers end experience of service. This behavior could be referred back to the same theory used for discussion of options, the Word-of-Mouth Theory. Instead of giving information on advantages and disadvantages over a product, a salesperson compares the two most suitable products for the customer. Through comparing the products, a salesperson could then gather information from the customer. However, gathering information through compare products is only possible if the customer discuss the advantages and disadvantages about the suggested products. This could possibly be a strategy which salespeople use in order to suggest the most suitable product for the customer in the end.

### 5.3.8 Give general information

In all the stores used for research the salespeople gave the customers general information about the product the customers have in mind. Even though the behavior only got 4/6 points, we do believe that all stores do give general information about the product or range of product in the same category. The reason for only 4 points is because of lack of customers in both the stores A and C.

This behavior is new which we do not have in our model. However, we should have had this behavior because it was even more common for salespeople than asking the customer follow up questions. We believe that the salespeople give general information to customer in order to give the customers a quick overview of the differences in the product range. This seems to be a common pattern for the salespeople in store.

## 5.4 Conclusion of the Analysis

As conclusion of the findings, it can be said that the behaviors approach customers, develop a sales strategy and compare products are common behaviors. Another possible behavior which was not included in our model is when salespeople give general information to customers. The behaviors, approach customers, develop a sales strategy, compare products and give general information, could be a normal way of acting as salesperson, hence the highest total points of each behavior. These behaviors could also be the behaviors which might affect the customer experience of service positively. By approaching the customer the salesperson might give the customer a feeling of importance, which could lead to better experience with the service. By developing a good sales strategy could lead to that the customer find the product suitable for the purpose. When the salesperson give general information, it gives the customer a brief picture of what sort the range of product that the customer can choose from. Also, when comparing products with each other, the salesperson will probably give the customer other options to think about, which reflects that the salesperson has competence of the product. The competencies could then influence the customer's experience of the service in a positive way because the customer receives help from a competent person in the certain area.

As mentioned before, we discovered two new behaviors which were not stated in our first model. Therefore, in the following figure (5.1), we have added the two new behaviors which we found common as well.

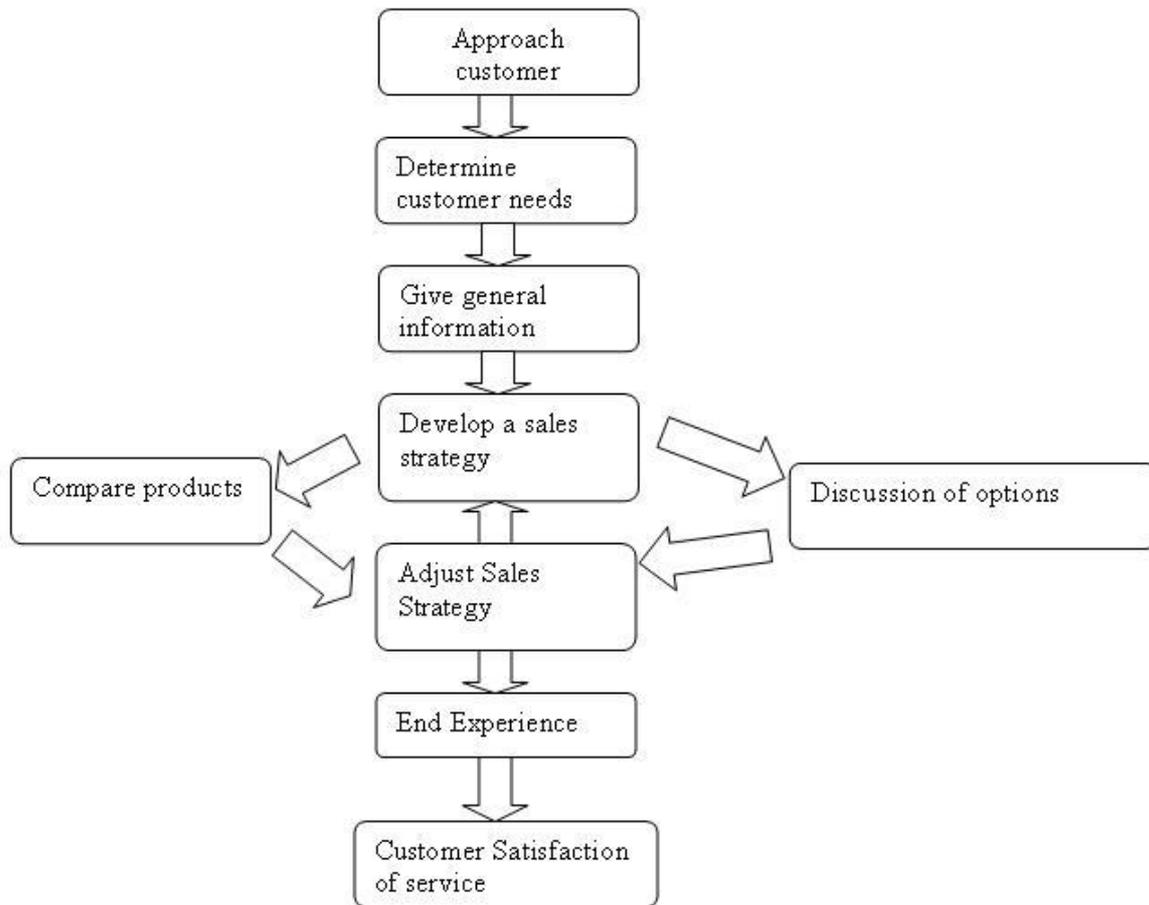


Figure 5.1 the (new) influence of salespersons' behavior on customer satisfaction of service- Model

The behaviors from our findings vary in points received. Even if some of the behaviors received low points, we find that it would be possible to apply it to our model. Some of the behaviors receiving low points could be replaced by the two new behaviors found. Therefore, determining that behaviors are not applicable to the model is not possible. It depends highly on the findings if the behaviors are applicable to our model or not.

The customer orientation measurement that is commonly used is the one that Narver and Slater developed 1990. In their customer orientation scale they measured three behavioral components that they believed affect the long term profit positively for a company. These components are customer orientation, competitor orientation and interfunctional coordination, all of these three components all had different behaviors that they measured in their research. Therefore, one possible way to use this research's new critical behavior could be as additional measurement to Narver and Slaters customer orientation scale.

Our general impression of customer orientation in retail stores is that the salespeople seem to be more active towards the customers. We believe the reason for this is that the salespeople have to promote many different brands and can not only focus on one brand. However, this statement is only a general idea from the researcher's point of view and needs to be further explored.

## 6. Conclusion

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*The final chapter will begin with a short summary of the dissertation and method used. There will also be conclusion of the findings and recommendations for future research.*

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### 6.1 Summary of the dissertation

Much research has been done on market orientation. However, there is a gap, since no studies has been done on the lower level of a business organization (Elg, 2003). Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to explain how salesperson behavior reflects customer orientation. The study focuses on salespersons' behavior and the outcome of customer satisfaction of service. In order to focus on the behavior of salespeople, an extensive literature review has been performed in the field of customer orientation. With the theories used, a model was developed with six different behavior factors. In order to study and test these behaviors, we defined twelve different sales criteria to use in our observations and experiments. These criteria were used in observations in three major electronic retail stores in the area of Kristianstad. Through our field study, two other behaviors were found and according to our analysis, these two behaviors are more common than some of the ones discussed in our model.

### 6.2 Conclusion

The methods mystery shopper and observation are two excellent methods to use. These two methods allowed us to study salespeople in the natural environment and without the aware of the salespeople. By using mystery shopper we could have control over what questions that will be asked, to act confused customer or a customer that is well-aware of what product that is preferred in order to study the different behavior of the salespeople. However, there are also disadvantages about mystery shopper. One of the disadvantages about mystery shopper is that we might have influenced the salesperson in some way, by provoking the salesperson to act with a certain behavior. However, our findings were enhanced by the observations we made. With the observations made, the results showed similar behavior from salespeople with other customers. One of the disadvantages with observation is that during our observation we could have missed behaviors or other important factors.

The results of the study shows that the behaviors approach customers and develop a sales strategy are the critical behaviors which could affect customer end experience of service in a positive way. During the field study, two other behaviors were found, compare products and give general information. Our conclusion of this study is that the four most common behaviors in the results are the one that possibly has the most positive influence of the customers end experience of service. The two new behaviors, give general information and compare products, meant that we needed to modify our model and the result of the new model was found as figure 5.1. We decided to keep all the behaviors from the first model and add the two new behaviors. The reason for this change is because we think that it needs more research on the field before any behaviors could be rejected. Although the result can be perceived that some behaviors are trends, it is not the case. One must understand that even if the result shows similar trend between salespeople, behavior depends highly on the individual salesperson.

### **6.3 Critical review**

The purpose of this dissertation was to get a deeper understanding of salespeople behaviors towards customer. Also, how their behaviors affected the customer satisfaction of the service. The results from the research show some specific behaviors that tend to be used among salespeople, and also affect the customer satisfaction of the service positively. However, the research result was not made in a statistically way and can therefore not be generalized.

A critical reflection is that salespeople are all individual and therefore every salesperson act in an individual way. Therefore, some specific behaviors for salespeople are hard to compile.

### **6.4 Practical implications**

The aim of this thesis was to fill up the academic gap in the research field of, which critical behaviors of salespeople that affect customer satisfaction of service in retail sector in Sweden. Previous research has focused on collecting data from business unit level and not on the individual level of the salesperson. Also, little research has been done in the retail sector. Therefore, this research has some academic importance.

For practical reasons, this dissertation's results and the conclusions drawn can be of some value for retail managers. The conclusions can be used as guidelines when educating salespeople in fulfilling customers' satisfaction of service.

### **6.5 Future research**

As we described in the first chapter, the limitation of this dissertation is time, amount of salespeople and a specific retail sector. Therefore, conducting a research with more time and amount of salespeople would give a deeper understanding of the behavior of salespeople. There could be other behaviors which was not observed in this research because of time limitation and could be observed with more salespeople and time. Future research could also be conducted in different sectors in order to determine if behaviors of salespeople is similar in different sectors.

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## **Appendix 1 Observations and Mystery shopping criteria**

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer
2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with
3. Is there anything specific they are looking for
4. Follow up questions
5. Listening and recommendation of product
6. Present advantages (pros) of the product
7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product
8. Inform about additional functions of the product
9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference
10. Special offer or personal insights
11. Ending of conversation
12. Last impression

## **Appendix 2 Appendix Action plan**

1. Discuss the different criteria so both researchers are aware of what we are looking at
2. Enter the store together
3. Look confused and look around
4. Hopefully a salesperson comes
5. When the salesperson asks if help is needed, answer confused of what product to choose.
6. Salesperson Listen to us and ask us about we might need
7. Tell the salesperson what sort of product you have in mind
8. Salesperson offer a product
9. Ask different questions about the product
10. Salesperson answer the questions
11. Act doubtful about the product and try to provoke the salesperson to give other options
12. Listen to the salespersons option(s)
13. Act thoughtful and try to look at the similar products
14. Say that you want to think about it and return another day
15. Go outside the store and discuss the observation criteria, compare the findings and write it down.

## **Appendix 3 Mystery shopping part 1 - Store A**

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer  
The salesperson smiled a little and was very nice.
2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with  
It took very long time before a salesperson came to us, approximately thirteen minutes. We also had to take a queue ticket to get any help. After we taken the queue ticket we had to wait 5 more minutes before the salesperson came.
3. Is there anything specific they are looking for  
The salesperson asked us what he could help us with.
4. Follow up questions  
The salesperson did not ask any questions.
5. Listening and recommendation of product  
The salesperson started by informing us about the difference between the different sizes about the computers. The salespersons recommended a product to us, a best seller. However, he did not recommend a product to us with our needs in mind. The salesperson only said that the specific computer was the best.
6. Present advantages (pros) of the product  
He did present the advantages with the product.
7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product  
He did not present any disadvantages with the product.
8. Inform about additional functions of the product  
The salesperson did inform us about an additional function of the product. There were a remote and a card reader that was special with the specific product.

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

No, the salesperson did not recommend any other options. The one showed for us was the best.

10. Special offer or personal insights

He did not offer any special offer however, he did give us personal insights saying that he thought the product was the best at the market.

11. Ending of conversation

The ending was good. He gave us a product brochure so that we could look at it again at home.

12. Last impression

The salesperson seemed a little bit stressed at the end. He walked away at the same time that he said goodbye and welcome again.

## **Appendix 4 Mystery shopping part 1 – Store B**

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer

The salesperson smiled and directly made eye contact once he saw us.

2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with

No approach even though we waited 10-13min at the computers looking at them. It required for us to walk to the help desk for computer and sound section.

3. Is there anything specific they are looking for

Once in front of the desk he asked if there was anything he could help us with.

4. Follow up questions

We said we needed a computer and he asked several questions to determine what purpose we had with the computer. Example: what we needed the computer for, if we had thought of anyone yet, if we played games with it and what range of price we have.

5. Listening and recommendation of product

He listened to what we had to say about what purpose the computer was for and recommended us to a HP computer

6. Present advantages (pros) of the product

This salesperson did not mention any advantages of this product. We needed to ask for it ourselves.

7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product

The salesperson did not mention any disadvantages with the product. We needed to ask for it ourselves.

8. Inform about additional functions of the product

No, only that it was touch screen on the Acer computer.

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

Yes, He recommended a similar product but a different brand (Acer).

10. Special offer or personal insights

No personal insights. However, he offered antivirus program for half the price.

11. Ending of conversation

The salesperson was calm and stood there until we started to walk away

12. Last impression

Good, Welcome again and think about the offer

Possible new behavior:

The salesperson compared the two machines, instead of talking about pro and con about a machine he compared them instead.

## **Appendix 5 Mystery shopping part 1 – Store C**

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer

Yes, both smiled and made eye contact with us so we knew he was coming to us

2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with

Approach was much better than OnOff and Elgiganten. Took around 7 min before he approached

3. Is there anything specific they are looking for

Yes

4. Follow up questions

Yes, but after he discussed generally about every brand they had. He asked what purpose the computer was for.

5. Listening and recommendation of product

He listened carefully and told us we will recommend us two of the computers

6. Present advantages (pros) of the product

This salesperson was very good with presenting the pros and disadvantages about the products

7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product

As mentioned before, very good at presenting the disadvantages

8. Inform about additional functions of the product

Information about the included remote control of the HP and the possibility of buying a docking station to the HP which the Asus did not have neither of them.

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

He recommended the similar product in the beginning

10. Special offer or personal insights

Antivirus to half the price as offer, but the personal insights was great. The salesperson gave us his personal experience about the heat issue from the HP computer and said which computer he personally think was the best.

11. Ending of conversation

Very good, the best ending of the three stores. The salesperson made a conclusion of what he said, discussed briefly the main pros and disadvantages about the products once again and said that we could think about it and welcome back.

#### 12. Last impression

The salesperson stood there until we thanked him for the help and we thanked him for the help.

Possible new behavior: this salesperson discussed general about every brand they had and compared the brands characteristics.

Possible new behavior: Between pro and con he compared both machines (HP VS Asus).

Possible new behavior: Conclusion of what was said in the end of the conversation

## **Appendix 6 Observation part 1 – Store A**

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer

Yes, smile and eye contact

2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with

No, using the queue ticket system

3. Is there anything specific they are looking for

4. Follow up questions

5. Listening and recommendation of product

6. Present advantages (pros) of the product

7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product

8. Inform about additional functions of the product

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

10. Special offer or personal insights

11. Ending of conversation

12. Last impression

The end experiences is really good, only this store have their salespeople follow the customer, carrying the product to the cash desk. The salesperson

## Appendix 7 Observation part 1 – Store B

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer

Yes

2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with

Approached the customer when there was no queue at the help desk

3. Is there anything specific they are looking for

Yes, he asked that once approached

4. Follow up questions

Really many questions

5. Listening and recommendation of product

Listens carefully

6. Present advantages (pros) of the product

All section observed brings up the pros about the product

7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product

Only 2 out of 3 brings up the disadvantages about the product

8. Inform about additional functions of the product

Only 1 out of 3 sections gave information about additional function of the product

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

All sections gave a similar product as option and compared the products

10. Special offer or personal insights

No special offer, but all sections gave personal insights or experience of the product

11. Ending of conversation

Good, calm and was not in a hurry

12. Last impression

From what we could observe is that the customer seemed satisfied and also bought a product

## Appendix 8 Observation part 1 – Store C

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer

Yes

2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with

Do not approach the customer

3. Is there anything specific they are looking for

Needed customer to ask in order to get help, also customer told what they were looking at specific before the salesperson helped them

4. Follow up questions

5. Listening and recommendation of product

6. Present advantages (pros) of the product

Presented advantages

7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product

Presented disadvantages, compared two products when pros and disadvantages was presented

8. Inform about additional functions of the product

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

10. Special offer or personal insights

11. Ending of conversation

12. Last

impression

## **Appendix 9 Mystery shopping part 2 – Store B**

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer

Eye contact but no smile

2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with

The salesperson approached us when walking by

3. Is there anything specific they are looking for

Yes, he asked if we were looking at anything specific camera (since we stood in the camera section)

4. Follow up questions

Only one follow up question, what price range we was thinking of

5. Listening and recommendation of product

He did recommend a product, but he did not ask any question about the purpose or preferences. However, he did listen carefully when we asked question

6. Present advantages (pros) of the product

No advantages of product was given

7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product

No disadvantages was presented, he did compare the products in the different price ranges

8. Inform about additional functions of the product

Nothing

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

He did not recommend any other product than the first suggested that it was special price week of

10. Special offer or personal insights

Nothing except the special price of the camera that week

11. Ending of conversation

Like every other salesperson, "welcome back and you are welcome to ask any question at any time"

12. Last impression

We found him in quite a hurry all the time, stressed out, which gave us the feeling of being stressed also

## **Appendix 10 Mystery shopping part 2 – Store C**

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer

No smile but eye contact

2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with

Even though the salesperson in the section saw us and we tried to give him eye contact he did not approach us until 10 minutes later

3. Is there anything specific they are looking for

Once approached, he asked if we needed assistance with anything specific

4. Follow up questions

The salesperson was really good on follow up questions; he asked several questions which he then asked follow up questions to

5. Listening and recommendation of product

He listened very carefully and calmly. However, he did not recommend any specific product, he offered a specific brand

6. Present advantages (pros) of the product

He presented the advantages of that brand

7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product

No disadvantages were presented on the suggested brand, but there were many mentioned disadvantages of the competitor brands

8. Inform about additional functions of the product

The salesperson gave a lot of information about additional functions of two certain products as examples that we could choose from

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

He did not recommend any similar brand that would suit our preferences since he argued that the brand suggested had the best picture which we said was the most important

10. Special offer or personal insights

No special offers or personal insights

11. Ending of conversation

Very good, he asked if we had any other questions regarding other products or the brand he had suggested. The salesperson also summed up everything he said and stood with us

a couple of minutes if we changed our minds about questions, before he left us alone to think about the information given

#### 12. Last impression

It took some time before he approached us; it started to frustrate us since we clearly showed that we needed help. However, when we got help the salesperson was very calm and helpful which was good. He spent a lot of time with us which were much appreciated in the end.

## **Appendix 11 Observation part 2 – Store A**

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer

Yes, both smile and eye contact

2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with

Only one salesperson approached the customer. However he asked which number she had (queue ticket)

3. Is there anything specific they are looking for

He did ask if there was anything specific the customer was looking for

4. Follow up questions

Since the customer was so detailed when giving information the salesperson did not ask any follow up questions

5. Listening and recommendation of product

The salesperson did listen carefully and recommended a product

6. Present advantages (pros) of the product

He did not present any advantages

7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product

No disadvantages was presented either

8. Inform about additional functions of the product

No information about additional functions was given

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

Yes, he came back with three similar products as options for the customer

10. Special offer or personal insights

Neither of them

11. Ending of conversation

The ending was ok; he agreed to help the customer get started with the product after payment at the cash desk

12. Last impression

Good, he followed the customer to the cash desk as last observation of salespeople did. The salesperson was also calm and agreed to help the customer get started with the product after purchase.

## **Appendix 12 Observation part 2 – Store B**

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer

Yes, both smile and eye contact

2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with

The salesperson did approach the customer as the first time observation was done

3. Is there anything specific they are looking for

He asked gentle if there was anything specific she was looking for

4. Follow up questions

The salesperson asked a lot of questions followed by a lot of follow up questions when the customer answered the first questions

5. Listening and recommendation of product

The salesperson listened careful and recommended a product

6. Present advantages (pros) of the product

He presented some advantages of the product

7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product

He did not directly point out the disadvantages of the product. However, the salesperson did compare the different products in the different price range

8. Inform about additional functions of the product

He gave much information about additional functions; much time was spent on explaining this

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

He did not recommend any similar product and he told the customers why, the product that was suggested was the product that would fit the preferences of the customer. The cheaper products would not fit and the more expensive would be too high price to what the purpose of the product was for

10. Special offer or personal insights

No personal insight but one special offer was made

11. Ending of conversation

Very good, he took the box with him and walked with the customer to the desk where he prepared them for the cash desk by typing in information about the customer. While

walking to the help desk he asked if there were anything else the customer would like to ask or buy, accessories to the product.

#### 12. Last impression

What we could observe was that the salesperson was calm, gave the customer time to think without stressing them

## Appendix 13 Observation part 2 – Store C

1. Smiles and make eye contact with the customer
2. Approach the customer and ask if there is anything he/she can help with
3. Is there anything specific they are looking for
4. Follow up questions
5. Listening and recommendation of product

6. Present advantages (pros) of the product

Yes, the salesperson did present advantages

7. Present disadvantages (disadvantages) of the product

The disadvantages was presented after the advantages and then the salesperson compared the suggested product with another product similar

8. Inform about additional functions of the product

No information about additional functions was given to the customer

9. Recommend a similar product that would fit the customer's preference

No similar product was suggested as a good option and the customer did buy the suggested option

10. Special offer or personal insights

Neither one of them was given

11. Ending of conversation

12. Last impression