The effect of rhetoric in personal selling
An observational study of how IKEA uses rhetoric in their sales interactions.

Master Thesis within Business Administration
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Abstract

Background: Rhetoric can be traced back to antiquity and is today a well used tool within marketing and persuasion. Although rhetoric is said to be the art of persuasion there is a lack of research concerning rhetoric used in personal selling, even though persuasion is one of the most important aspects of personal selling. Personal selling is said to be an underlying factor for companies marketing success, therefore the authors see the importance of researching the relationship between rhetoric and personal selling.

To be able to investigate how rhetoric effects personal selling, this thesis was conducted in cooperation with IKEA Jönköping. Through the cooperation with IKEA Jönköping, the authors will gain a unique real-life insight into the phenomenon.

Purpose: This thesis aims to understand how rhetoric is used, and what effects the phenomenon has on the interaction between a customer and a sales person.

Method: Since very little was previously researched within the use of rhetoric in personal selling, the foundation for the primary data collection was based on the theoretical framework that was developed. 112 observations and 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted during 9 days, in order to observe the phenomenon in its natural environment.

Conclusion: When used correctly, arguments (Logos) were used in order to persuade the customer, character (Ethos) created a higher credibility of the sales person and emotional and personal associations (Pathos) lead customers being more trusting towards the sellers. If expertise and a strong character were absent in the interactions the sales persons were generally not successful in increasing customer’s attitudes and purchase intentions. When using the rhetorical methods correctly trust, credibility, loyalty and a positive customer attitude could be achieved by the sales person.
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# Introduction

The first chapter of the thesis will introduce the reader to the background of the problem, purpose and research questions. Relevant delimitations and definitions will also be stated.

## 1.1 Background to problem

Effective selling and sales management is a critical field in order for companies to gain marketing success (Jones, Brown, Zoltners, & Weitz, 2005) due to this, companies and retailers are nowadays struggling to safety set their service quality in order to ensure that their goals will be accomplished through e.g. customer surveys and mystery shoppers (Levy & Weitz, 2009). Although personal selling is much more difficult to control than other elements of advertising it is also far more effective on sales since it provides a much more personal influence on the sale (Dahlen, Lange & Smith, 2010) and is therefore a important subject to master.

Personal selling and sales management is well examined and can be defined as: “communication processes in which salespeople help customers satisfy their needs through face-to-face exchange of information” (Levy & Weitz, 2009, p. 451). Personal selling is one of the major components in the marketing mix (Dahlen et al, 2010) and is said to be “a process whose success depends on the salesperson properly identifying and satisfying the needs of the customer” (Szymanski, 1988, p.65). Previous studies have shown that sale people’s performance and interaction with potential customers is crucial for company success. The sales force needs to possess the ability to identify customers product and service needs (Garcia-Murillo & Annabil, 2002).

Rhetoric is said to be the science and art of speech and persuasion. It was created by the Greeks and Romans during antiquity and was until the 18th century, a compulsory subject in education. During the 20th century the art of rhetoric was neglected and people were no longer interested in the art that had captivated people during the last 2000 years. After World War two the subject rose to prominence and it once again became fashionable to research, read and talk about rhetoric (Johannesson, 1990). Aristotle defined rhetoric as; “That its function is not to persuade but to see the available means of persuasion in each case”.

Rhetoric is presently a tool widely used in marketing and can be traced back to when farmers and other tradesmen competed in vast markets and on streets trying to sell their merchandise, (Johannesson, 1998). During that era sales people yelled out different offerings in order to catch the attention of the buyers and pursue them to buy their products. In present times, this can still be seen in various types of marketing where companies “scream” out offerings and arguments in order to catch our attention, leading to a purchase. Research has been carried out about rhetoric and how it affects leaders, groups and advertisements, but research regarding personal selling and rhetoric has been absent and is therefore going to be the main topic of this thesis in order to see its role and if and how it effects personal selling.

IKEA was established in Sweden, Agunnaryd, in 1943 and is today one of the largest furniture chains in the world including 123 000 employees in 25 countries and has a yearly turnover that reaches 21, 5 billion SEK (IKEA, 2011). IKEA has historically been a symbol of Sweden and “Swedishness” thanks to their promotion of the Swedish culture, this has been manifested in the terms: “simplicity, equality and openness to thoughtful influence”. IKEA Jönköping, Sweden, was opened in 1981 and currently has 380 co-workers, they have a limited amount of employees and resources in its marketing departments since an overall global marketing strategy is implemented for IKEA worldwide that includes space for local implementations (IKEA, 2011).
IKEA’s concept is a department store where the customers have the option of making a purchase without having contact with any employee, this is possible because of the information tags on every product, the self-storage and the self-scanning cashiers. Still, they are constantly conscious about providing the highest level of service possible to their customers, through personal selling and the general service provided in the stores when needed. IKEA has a mindset of “simplicity and self-service” which makes it even more important to understand the effects of personal selling (Malm, personal communication, 2011) and how to best increase the level of service in order to increase sales and the satisfaction of the customers.

To be able to investigate how rhetoric is used in personal selling and how it can affect the customers and sales personnel, this thesis will be conducted in co-operation with IKEA Jönköping. This will result in more “real-life” knowledge and insight into the phenomena. In order for them to increase their quality of the personal selling, IKEA should gain insight into how rhetoric is used in personal selling and how it affects the customers, they should also get an understanding for how their customers perceive the service at their department store.

The method used for this study will have a qualitative approach and will be done in two parts. First, the sales interactions between the sales personnel and customer will be studied through observations made by the authors at IKEA Jönköping. During the observations the use of rhetorical tools will be documented and as well as the customer’s reaction towards these, in order to see how the sales persons use rhetoric and how the customers respond to this. Through the observations, the authors will receive first hand data and also a unique insight that will be gained by having observed the phenomena in its natural environment.

The second part of the study will investigate how the current customers perceive the personal selling, through semi-structured interviews. In the study of the sales interactions the use of rhetorical tools will be documented as well as customer attitudes towards the sales personnel. By doing the interviews the authors will know how the customer perceives the service at IKEA and through this information it can be determined if the findings from the interviews correspond with the observations made.

IKEA has the alternative to implement the key findings of this study which might lead to a higher level of service and thus generate more satisfied customers. By knowing how the customers in the local market perceive and are in fact treated in their interactions with the sales people of IKEA Jönköping, improvements can ultimately be made in order to adapt the sales people to the current market conditions.

This study is of significance since it explores an area of personal selling and customer interaction previously not researched extensively. The role of rhetoric in personal selling may offer a clear way of improving sales people’s skills. The study will also be of value for IKEA Jönköping since it investigates an issue of importance since training its employees is one of the few actual factors IKEA Jönköping can implement changes to at a local level, this study will also gain in-depth knowledge of the customers in the local Jönköping market.
1.2 Purpose
This thesis aims to understand how rhetoric is used, and what effects the phenomenon has on the interaction between a customer and a sales person.

1.3 Research Questions
This thesis is going to investigate how rhetoric is used in personal selling at IKEA Jönköping and what effects rhetoric has on sales personnel and customers. In order to achieve this objective, the following research question will be included:

- How is rhetoric used in personal selling at IKEA Jönköping?
- How do IKEA Jönköping’s customers perceive IKEA in terms of personal selling?
- What effect does rhetoric have on the sales interaction between a sales person and a customer?

1.4 Delimitations
Due to financial and time limitations the study was only conducted at IKEA Jönköping, this gives a result that might not correspond to the phenomenon in other locations. Due to the study only being conducted at IKEA Jönköping, the results only concerns this geographical area and company of personal selling which implicates that there might have been a different result if the study had been conducted in a different company or industry.

The trustworthiness of the study might be questioned due to the observations only being conducted during one week. Even though the authors did the observations every day of the week and during different time intervals, a longer time period was not covered. The trustworthiness could be increased by observing the sales interaction during a month, a year, which might had produced a different result.

1.5 Definitions
**Personal selling** is a face-to-face interaction where the objective is to create a relationship between customer and salesman with the end goal of selling a service or product, whose success is said to dependent upon if the salesperson properly identifies and satisfies the needs of the customer (Szymanski, 1988).

**Rhetoric** is the art of persuasion, to make people freely follow a certain message. With rhetoric it is possible to strengthen the case, present metaphors, create liveliness and through this give the listener more clarity concerning the case. There are three different means of persuasion that apply, personal character (Ethos), emotions (Pathos) and the use of reasoning (Logos). (Hoffman & Ford, 2010).

**Persuasion** - the process by which a person’s attitudes or behaviors are, without duress, influenced by communications from other people. Not all communication is intended to be persuasive; other purposes include informing or entertaining. Persuasion often involves manipulating people and for this reason many find the exercise distasteful. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2011)

**Aristotle (384 – 322 B.C)** is said to be one of the most influential minds in rhetoric (Lindqvist, 2008.) He believed in two types of knowledge, the knowledge that can only exist in one way (natural science) and knowledge that can exist in other ways (rhetoric). He believed that the focus of rhetoric should be on logical argumentation rather than style or intentions (Holmgren, 2009).

**Non verbal communication** - Non-verbal behavior is vital part of how humans interact and communicate, this communication includes body language and facial expressions (Adams & Jones, 2011).
2 Theoretical Framework

In this section the theoretical framework is presented from which the observations and interviews are based. A model will also be presented that was created by the authors to show the relationship between rhetoric and personal selling.

2.1 Rhetoric

2.1.1 What is rhetoric?

In order to understand the main subject of this thesis, the first part of the theoretical framework will be spent explaining the concept of rhetoric. Rhetoric can be described as: “persuasion is added by the choice of language. Examples strengthen the case and metaphors give style, clarity, charm and distinction as nothing else can. One can create liveliness by being graphic and by surprising the listener”, (Caballero, Dickinson & Townsend, 1984, p.16). Lindqvist (2008, p. 25) states that “rhetoric is the study of how words and other types of symbols are used to influence”. Many authors have different beliefs about what rhetoric in fact is, but they all agree that rhetoric is something that can persuade, influence or by others means affect a person by the use of wording in texts and in speeches.

In rhetoric there are three means that contribute to persuasion according to Hoffman and Ford (2010). These three means are called Ethos, Pathos and Logos. The first, Ethos is the character itself. Aristotle argued that a speaker could pursue his or her audience just by appearing, he also stated that a person with the power of Ethos should possess three qualities – intelligence, goodwill and character. Aristotle argued that people tend to trust an honest person and rely upon their own judgement as to whether or not the person is trustworthy. Ethos can be created through the speech itself, but can also be shaped by the speaker’s reputation that the listener has found out in advance to the speech (Hoffman & Ford, 2010).

The second tool is Pathos, Pathos is said to be the means that contributes to persuasion through emotions. Aristotle wrote “We give very different decisions under the sway of pain or joy and liking or hatred”. (Aristole, 1932 as cited in Hoffman & Ford, 2010, p. 29) Through the use of Pathos, the speaker can give the listener hope, by speaking about a brighter future or create fear by e.g. talking about greenhouse effects. Pathos can also be used to evoke the listener’s sympathy or passion. Through the use of these emotions the speaker will be able to influence the listener, according to Hoffman and Ford (2010).

The last means, Logos is the use of arguments and reasons. All arguments are said to have three parts, first there is a claim that is the basic idea. The idea (claim) should be supported by evidence which is the data that supports the claim and last, there should be reasoning which is the logical connection between the claim and the evidence. Logos turns to the facts and senses in order to persuade people, but in order for the claim to be persuasive, it needs to be supported by the evidence (Hoffman, 2009).

These three means of persuasion are connected to each other and if all three appear, the listener will be more susceptible to the speaker’s objective. An appeal built on reasoning and arguments is easier for the listeners to take in if it is presented by a credible person that creates an emotional state for the individual (Hoffman & Ford, 2010).

2.1.2 The history of Rhetoric

Rhetoric is an old science that can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. The word rhetoric is derived from the Greek word rhêtorikê and means “speaker”. By 400 B.C rhetoric grew and became a mandatory subject in education for the young Greeks, this was while the Greek culture was spreading across
the world and 90 B.C. rhetoric arrived in Rome. Rhetoric was at this time an instrument used to attain personal success, to participate in political debates and also to show knowledge and wisdom, (Holmgren, 2009).

In the middle ages (500 – 1500) rhetoric was mostly used to serve the church and was not as widely used as it was during antiquity. The Greek rhetoric was forgotten and the famous works by Aristotle were not known until they had been translated from Arabic to Latin in the year 1256 and from Greek to Latin in the year 1270, during the middle ages the only rhetoric that was known was the Roman rhetoric. (Holmgren, 2009). During this period of time rhetoric was mostly used in writing and played a role in teaching, but in contrast to previously, rhetoric was now mostly used to protect Christianity.

During the renaissance period the study of rhetoric flourished, it was once again important to have rhetorical skills in order to be authoritative and in education rhetoric had a dominant role. During this era old rhetorical works were rediscovered and many people could look back to the classical rhetoric and understand its role in creating the current civilization. (Holmgren, 2009).

During the 17th and 18th century rhetoric grew into a communication tool used to transfer knowledge from scholars to the general public. Rhetorical skills were also used to act sophisticated in contexts such as discussion groups. (Holmgren, 2009). The interest for novels grew during the 1700th century and together with this the interest for writing grew which resulted in many books including how to master the topic of rhetoric.

The 20th century brought a downfall for rhetoric, the meaning of rhetoric had been divided into two, where one side considered rhetoric to be something positive and the heritage from the ancient world. The other side considered rhetoric to be something negative and because of this, rhetoric was in its death bed, but as time went on, the art of rhetoric came back into public interest more and more. The real boost for the art of rhetoric came with the linguistic turn, which is the belief that language is not only a tool for labelling objects, but something that can both enable people to expand or restrain their thinking. Rhetoric now came to be used more often than before. The technological development, i.e. the radio, made it possible to reach more people then ever before. Rhetoric was used by chiefs of states such as Churchill, Hitler and Roosevelt in order to speak to their nations in a persuasive way. (Holmgren, 2009).

At present, rhetoric is widely used in advertisements, news and entertainment and the tools for using the art have been developed even further. Television makes the body language as important as the actual words that are being said, the internet enables everyone to speak their minds to the rest of the world. (Holmgren, 2009). One of the greatest difficulties today is not to be able to speak your mind, but rather to stand out from the crowd.

2.2 Ethos, Pathos & Logos

Aristotle believed in three means that would contribute to persuasion. The first is the character itself (Ethos), the second is the emotions that the speaker creates (Pathos) and the last means are the arguments and reasons (Logos). (Hoffman & Ford, 2010). These three means are often said to be the three main building blocks in rhetoric. When reading books and articles concerning rhetoric these concepts appear constantly and in order to fully understand rhetoric the three means of persuasion are crucial. Therefore Ethos, Pathos and Logos will be further explained below.

2.2.1 Ethos – Character

Ethos is how the audience perceives the personal traits of the speaker and how this affects the credibility. To be accepted as credible the speaker has to create a sense of belonging with the audience, thus
portraying himself as knowledgeable and trustworthy, according to Rydstedt (1993). Johanesson (1998) believes that an efficient method for Ethos creation is having introductions that create a sense of belonging, a sense of us against them, the audience is also affected by the character and the personality that is shown by the speaker.

The meaning of Ethos has historically been the moral authority that made the speaker convincing. It might equal what at present is known as a public person’s image, the picture of self that is sold, enacted and the authority the speaker possesses. An idea in close proximity to Ethos is the concept of charisma, which has become increasingly important. (Hägg, 2002)

Aristotele argued that “We always trust honest people more readily and we rely on our judgment of honesty even more when the issue is one which makes people disagree”, as stated by Hoffman and Ford, (2010, p.26). Furthermore Aristotele argued that a speaker who possessed the persuasive power of Ethos exhibited three qualities: intelligence, goodwill and character. The intelligent speaker made wise decisions based on his ability and knowledge, while the traits exhibited by character were the beliefs and actions of the speaker compared to the standards of society in which the speaker operated. The last criterion to be fulfilled in Ethos is goodwill, this refers to whether or not the speaker shows concern for the audience, in accordance with statements by Hoffman and Ford (2010).

Hauser (1986) argues that people will tend to have more confidence in speakers who possess the quality intelligence, thus exhibiting the following attributes. Individuals who are well informed are clearheaded and reasonable in their beliefs and who most importantly are able to give reasons and evidence in response to objections. If the speaker also has special expertise through training and experience, this will further increase the level of confidence held by the audience. One example of this was when Edward Kennedy failed during the 1980 U.S. presidential campaign to clearly and inspiringly explain to a journalist why he sought to be president and was seen by the general public as a self-seeking individual. This example was mentioned by Hauser (1986), that not being able to clearly articulate a mission can lead to political suicide.

Human decision making is not merely based on what is said, but one also has to take into account the effect of who is saying it. Hauser (1986) claims that the speaker inevitably possesses some level of authority, this source of personal power is vital in rhetoric. Someone who has authority has the ability to either have a positive or negative impact on you, both your thoughts and actions can be influenced by someone how has some level of power over you.

One criticism noted by Hauser (1986) is that Ethos or authority should not be seen as a quality or an attribute that a specific person possesses, but that it should be seen as a social construct. Furthermore Hauser (1986) states that Ethos is not a thing or a quality but that it is an interpretation, it is a product of the interaction between the audience and the speaker. (Hauser, 1986).

The words of the speaker only perform some of the image making credibility, according to Hart (1997). Credibility is also established by human factors like human prejudice, media effects, the Rhetor’s sponsors, the time of day and audience confusion. An example put forward by Hart (1997) is that corporate scandals affecting the sponsors of the Rhetor will have a lasting negative effect on credibility.

Personal sellers represent a company so both the credibility of the company as well as the character traits of the personal seller will affect Ethos. A crucial trait is to possess intelligence, Salomon et al (2010) state that salespeople have different resources to offer the potential customer, of which the most important is product expertise, thus making the consumer’s choice easier. Most companies have training programs for their sales personnel this will further improve the level of confidence held by the audience, this is in line with the statement by Hauser (1986), who claims that if the speaker also has spe-
cial expertise through training and experience, this will further increase the level of confidence held by the audience.

Some speakers use I statements continuously while others do not, when speakers suddenly use I statements, by telling a personal anecdote listeners tend to pay closer attention, since they sense a shift in the discussion. The benefit of using intriguing “I arguments” is that listeners are temporarily open to influence because identifying with another person is a basic human instinct (Hart, 1997).

Recent studies have shown that the reputation of the speaker also affect perceived credibility. Modern concepts of credibility also includes charisma, according to Hoffman and Ford (2007, p.27) charisma is the “quality of being interpersonally attractive and enthusiastic”. Charismatic leadership is characterized by the ability to articulate an appealing vision, displaying self-confidence and being a role model by exemplary behavior. Some other reoccurring traits and abilities are exhibiting creative behavior, taking personal risks and showing sensitivity to followers needs, (Neider & Schriesheim, 2002). The effects of charismatic leadership are often that followers develop trust, respect and loyalty for the leader. Charismatic leaders are able to form emotional as well as value based bonds with their followers, (Neider & Schriesheim, 2002).

### 2.2.2 Pathos – Emotions

It is not only the character itself that determines how and if people will be persuaded by a speech, another important factor is the feeling that is created by the speaker. Aristotle named the second mean of persuasion Pathos, the feelings. Pathos treats how the speaker puts the audience in an emotional state and through this convinces them that his or her point of view is correct. In personal selling the feeling created by the sales person is very important. According to Solomon et al (2010, p. 61) “a consumer’s mood will have an impact on the purchase decision” and moods can be affected by the ambience of the store, the weather outside and others factors that can be tied the consumption situation. One of these factors can be the sales personnel whom are to a great extent interwove in the consumption situation, but since Solomon et al (2010) mention that there are more factors that have an impact on the customer, Pathos can be said to be created by the surrounding as a whole and not just by the sales person.

To be able to put the audience or customer in an emotional state of mind, the speaker must know what psychological factors will have an effect on the audience, only demanding the audience to laugh or cry would most likely have the opposite effect. Therefore the main point of Pathos is to understand the feelings of the audience and use them as a tool of persuasion, (Lindqvist, 2008). Others argue that there is no “head and heart” (emotion and fact) and that people react with all of themselves (Hart, 1997) and to try to explain some rhetorical appeals as logical and emotional is to try to deal with a complex human thinking/feeling process. Hart (1997) also states that some people are more emotional than others and some are more rational. Therefore the main concern should be in the layout of the speech i.e. to use the speaker’s state of excitement and the speaker’s background in order to persuade the audience and not the separation of emotional and logical arguments.

Even though some argue that the heart cannot be separated from the head, many strong examples of Pathos can be seen everywhere, especially in marketing. Think about the last advertisement you saw, did you feel anything? Travel companies have commercials that include blue water, warm sun, cold drinks and a sensual ambience (Johannesson, 1998). Chocolate companies use advertisements where the focus is on a family, eating the chocolate together, instead focusing in the product which is chocolate. These are examples how companies try to persuade people to buy their product by using emotions and not by portraying the products actual features.
The discussion whether it is right or wrong to pursue or influence people through the use of emotions and feelings has been discussed in-depth and is still a hot topic in debates and media. Some argue that this is an effective way of persuasion that has its roots in antiquity, while moralists claim that it is wrong to use the subconscious and unawareness of people for personal gain (Johannesson, 1998). In marketing this is a widely used instrument and a business that discontinues the use of emotions and feelings will most probably risk not being able to keep up with the competition in terms of advertisement, therefore Pathos should be considered as a big part in the “persuasion process”.

There are some general principles when arousing feelings, these will be explained further. The success is depending upon the speaker’s ability to describe the case and the feeling. The honesty of the speaker is important, when a speaker shows his or her own emotions the speech will be more powerful, because most people can discover a dishonest speaker. (Lindqvist, 2008). This can also be referred to Salomon et al, (2010) who state that source creditability including credibility, trustworthiness and perceived expertise are particularly important source characteristics when trying to persuade through a message. Feelings can also rub off, an example can be when a friend is happy, you are more likely to become happy in his or her surroundings. The concreteness is also important, a speaker should be able to describe and give details about a case in order for the audience to see the whole picture and be affected (Lindqvist, 2008).

2.2.3 Logos - Argumentation

When the speaker uses argumentation, Logos, as a persuasive approach he or she will not create any emotions in order to persuade but will influence and persuade the listener by convincing him or her on an intellectual level. This can be done by showing proof that will support the claim or through the use of an established principal to support the speakers claim (Persson, 2002). Hauser (1986) on the other hand, argues that the use of “proof” is misleading since many rhetoricians refer to essays and public addresses which are not scientific proof but is rather seen as an opinion. “Proof” is therefore a term that can be misleading since Logos involves the interest of the audience and their values. Logos is not a tool for inventing facts, instead it should be used to interpret facts and give them meaning through rhetoric. Arguments are also rhetorical tools used in advertisements and personal selling. Many commercials use arguments to support why their product is the preferable one and sales people might use arguments to further push add-on sales forward.

The whole argumentation process that is presented in rhetoric is called a “case” (Hauser, 1986). During a case the speaker usually chooses three main arguments, this makes the message clearer and it will not contain too much information to handle for the receiver (Klerfelt, 2010). When a speaker uses more then three arguments it can in some cases be positive, but there is always a risk as the number of arguments increase that a number of them will be perceived as mediocre and weak, thus having a negative effect on the remaining arguments (Persson, 2002). The most important thing when managing arguments is to emphasize the ones with the most impact and efficiency towards the public or person the speech is addressed to. These arguments should be presented in the beginning and the end of the speech in order to achieve the best effect. (Persson, 2002)

There should be “proof” that the speaker is correct in his or her claim, proof can be an example or support from other sources. There are three types of examples that can be used, the ordinary examples, examples that are founded in the speakers own experiences and examples outside the topic. The ordinary examples are the most used, here the speaker presents statistics, history or expert opinions. The examples founded in the speakers own experiences have a higher value in persuasion, but it is important to understand the value of the experiences. An example outside the topic is the use of metaphors and comparisons between two topics e.g. nature and sport. (Persson, 2002)
Even though arguments often are essential for persuasion the speaker needs to use them well in order to achieve the purpose. A speaker needs to not only focus on his or her arguments but also respect the thoughts of the listener. Interweaving arguments can be done in order to make the speech feel more natural (Persson, 2002).

### 2.2.4 The personal selling process

In order to succeed in sales there a number of steps that are needed to be gone through, these are called the personal selling process. The traditional selling process which has seven steps according to Kotler, Armstrong, Wong and Saunders (2008) has the following layout:

![Diagram of the personal selling process]

The personal selling process by Kotler et al (2008) is a good model to use as a starting point when evaluating or assessing the personal selling in different business concepts, however the entire model may not be appropriate for all personal selling businesses. It should be noted that this model is primarily used in business to business settings, however the authors feel that a majority of the steps in this personal selling process can be implemented in a business to consumer setting.

**Prospecting** is the process of identifying potential customers, a sales person may need to approach many potential prospects that will generate only a few sales. A vital skill for sales people is to occupy the skills needed to qualify leads, this is the ability to identify the good once and to be able to sort out the poor. Parameters that are used to qualify prospects include financial ability and possibility for sales growth. (Kotler et al, 2008)

**Preapproach** entails that the sales force should acquire as much knowledge as possible about the potential customer, such as what it needs and who is involved in their buying process. The sales person must also decide on the best approach which may be a personal visit, phone call or letter. The last thing that needs to be considered at this stage is to figure out an overall sales strategy. (Kotler et al 2008). The first two steps may not be vital in a business to consumer setting, but are presented since they are a part of the model. However in a business to consumer selling situation, the interaction with the potential customer usually beings in the approach step.

**Approach** is the step where a relationship is established, the sales force needs to know how to “meet and greet” the prospect in a professional way for the relationship to get underway. The appearance of the sales force is essential in order to make positive impression. A positive opening line can generate goodwill throughout the relationship, this is usually followed by questions to determine customer needs. One way of generating curiosity and attention from the customer is to show samples or a display of featured products, (Kotler et al, 2008). A statement that is in line with Kotler et al (2008), is Dahlen et al, (2010) who claim that the success of personal selling depends upon the sales person’s ability to identify and satisfy the customer’s needs.
Presentation and demonstration part of the process is when the “product story” is told, here the customer benefits are presented, in order to demonstrate how they solve customer problems. The sales person should be a problem solver, responding to customers problems with the right products and benefits. Qualities that are valued in sales people by customers are empathy, good listening skills and honesty. The most important trait a sales person can possess is the ability to listen and to be able to build strong relationships. (Kotler et al, 2008). Additionally, in order to be seen as a credible problem solver by the customer the seller needs to possess product expertise since knowledgeable people are more likely to be listened to according to Fischer et al (1979). The ability for a seller to build lasting personal relationships may not be vital in selling directly to consumers, but it is still important to retain the customers e.g. through loyalty programs.

Handling objections from customers is a part of the selling approach, customers can either have logical or psychological objections, by remaining positive and seeing objections as an opportunity to clarify product features and giving additional information, sales personnel can turn the objection into a reason for buying. (Kotler et al, 2008). Through the use of Pathos, emotional objections can be overcome, Johansson (1998) argues that Pathos is a highly efficient way of persuasion. However in order to use Pathos in argumentation the seller must be able to sense the customers emotional state. Kidwell, McFarland and Avila (2007) found that sellers who could perceive emotions could more easily change the content of their arguments to match with customer's emotional state.

Closing is where the actual sale takes place, where the order is placed, it of absolute importance that the employees can recognize the correct moment in which to close a sale. There are several techniques to do this, by offering to write up the order or to ask for the order. (Kotler et al, 2008).

Follow-up is the final step in the personal selling process, which ensures customer satisfaction and the continuation of the business relationship. This can be done through follow-up calls to make sure everything is satisfactory or to reveal problems. (Kotler et al, 2008). In a business to consumer setting it may be difficult to reach the specific customers and also very time consuming, an alternative to making follow-up calls is retaining and letting the customers air opinions through loyalty programs. According to Salomon et al (2010) retailers put great value in loyal customers, there is an abundance of choices for customers so it is becoming increasingly important to retain them. This can be done by having a loyalty program that rewards loyal customers.

2.2.5 The Rhetorical process

Rhetoric has been said to be the method of preparing a speech (Hedlund & Johannesson, 1993). Rhetoricians searched for the most important parts in the process of conducting the perfect speech and found five main parts which together are named the rhetorical process. The Rhetorical process can therefore be described as five steps to make the perfect speech. Even though the rhetorical process is not applicable towards the traditional personal selling process there are still steps that can be seen in both processes.

The five steps included are called Inventio, Dispositio, Elocution, Memoria and Actio and will be explained further below.
Inventio is the first step in the rhetorical process. Inventio is according to Lindqvist (2008, p.65) the “mapping of subjects, themes, stories, feelings, difficulties in arguments or other “things” that play a role in the writing of the speech – including arguments”. Inventio takes place before the speech, in the writing process. Hedlund and Johannesson (1993, p. 16) refer Inventio as “analyzing the situation, find your own attitude to the situation and search for arguments to support the message”. In this step the speaker has an idea, but not necessarily the entire plot of what the speech will concern and the speaker searches for what the speech will include such as feelings and arguments (Lindqvist, 2008). This can be compared to the second step in the traditional personal selling process, “pre-approach” in which the salesman is acquiring information of the customer (Kotler et al, 2008). Even though these two processes master two different subjects, a relationship can be seen between how rhetoricians and a sales person go through their processes’ in similar ways.

The second step, the Dispositio treats how the speaker constructs his speech. This is, not as Inventio, about the content of the speech but the structure of it. Dispositio can be said to be the part where the rhetorical structures and arrangements are made of the material found in Inventio, (Hedlund & Johannesson, 1993). It can be of crucial importance for a speech to have the right construct in order to persuade the audience (Lindqvist, 2008). A speaker can use the key components of rhetoric, Ethos, Pathos and Logos as a base for a simple outline.

Elocutio is the third step and focuses on choosing of the right wording for the speech, different audiences are spoken to in different languages, highly-educated people are spoken to in other words than low-educated audiences are. Many rhetoricians claim that Elocutio is the most complex step in the rhetorical process (Lindqvist, 2008). Most rhetoricians strive to make their speeches as persuasive as possible by the use of wording and expressions during this phase of the construction.

The fourth phase is called Memoria, according to Hedlund and Johannesson, (1993). While Lindqvist (2008) states that Memoria is the last stage. Since Memoria is the stage where the speaker memorizes the speech in order for it to be more convincing and sound more natural, it would be logical that this stage is prior to the execution. The memorizing stage is preparing in order for the speaker to convince the audience and make them feel that the speech comes from the heart and not that it is scripted (Lindqvist, 2008). Also Memoria can be connected to the pre-approach in the personal selling process, where the sales person is supposed to decide on the overall strategy to use (Kotler et al, 2008). Each salesman often has many different sales tactics and strategies which is a result of previously successful sales interactions which have been memorized, and are re-used when needed.

The last step of the rhetorical process is the execution of the prepared speech, Actio. During this phase the speaker decides how he or she should act during the speech e.g. having eye contact with the audience, speaking loudly and clearly and how to use body language (Lindqvist, 2008). This phase is not well discussed in comparison to the other stages, Aristotle introduced Actio as a part of the rhetorical process but also states that this phase is more impacted by nature and surroundings than the other phases (Lindqvist, 2008).

Actio can be connected to the fourth and fifth parts of the normal personal selling process. During these two steps, the sales person presents and demonstrates the product as well as handling objections from the customer (Kotler et al, 2008). In Actio the speaker presents his speech and is exposed to the impact of the surroundings in terms of environment but also the opinions of the audience.

2.3 Rhetoric used in marketing

As stated above, rhetoric is a tool used to persuade an audience through the use of wording. According to Johanesson (1998) marketing is a tool used to persuade, which is comparable with rhetoric. Rhetoric
used in marketing can be traced back to when there were no stores and the whole market consisted of people selling their goods on streets and in big markets. During this time period the sales people were yelling out different offerings in order to attract people’s attention, which preferably would lead to a purchase, which is similar to today’s advertisements and commercials (Johannesson, 1998). Today, commercials are extended with pictures, product brands and argumentation. In marketing at present, it can be seen that the three means of persuasion, Ethos, Logos and Pathos are used, this would indicate that marketing can be compared with rhetoric. This shows how applicable rhetoric and its components are to other fields, such as marketing and personal selling.

When using rhetoric in marketing it is common to use arguments, also called Logos, which is one of the three means of persuasion. This is done in order to minimize the freedom of choice for the customers by providing arguments that will, step by step, diminish the other options and make the option presented in the advertisement seem most appropriate (Hedlund & Johanesson, 1993). This contradicts to Persson (2002) who believes that more than three arguments can make all of the arguments used seem weak and therefore diminish the effect of them. At present customers are often in a state of sensory overload according to Salomon et al (2010) steaming from massive amounts of advertisements and other types of marketing tools. Therefore it seems more reasonable that in order to differentiate from the mass, a product needs to have 1-3 strong arguments that people will react to.

The name of a product or company brand can create trust for the customer, because of the reputation or prior knowledge of the brand. This is a type of Ethos that will increase the belief of quality in the products or services (Johannesson, 1998). This has been a widespread phenomenon that was used even before industrialism, when customers bought services and products in their local markets (Johannesson, 1998) and is as relevant today where a brand name can be a company’s largest asset. Levy and Weitz, (2009) also agree that brand loyalty can be developed, this is because the customer knows what to expect of the products or services given by the company.

Pathos is a means of persuasion that often is used in marketing. As states above, many companies use different ways to stimulate a feeling through an advertisement for the receiver, this is done by using wording, pictures and movies. Instead of placing the product features in focus many of businesses focus on the feeling that can be obtained by the product. An example of this is when a travel agency focuses their advertisements on the blue water, a scorching sun and cold drinks which create a holiday feeling, (Johnnesson, 1998). Many advertisements are addressed to the ideal self of the customer, when trying to persuade potential customers through the creation of a feeling. The ideal self is said to be the customers perception of who they want to be (Salomon et al, 2010), this can be used to create a romantic advertisement of a couple kissing in a sofa, since the customer then wants to be in a romantic relationship, they purchase the sofa, in order to achieve the “ideal self”.

Hedlund and Johanesson, (1993) have converted the rhetorical process to a procedure used to make commercials in marketing, in order to further show the correlation between rhetoric and marketing. The first step in the rhetorical process is Inventio, which can be seen as the marketing research in a marketing perspective. The marketer, similar to the rhetorician, searches for information about the target audience in order to be able to connect to their feelings, (Hedlund & Johanesson, 1993). After this the marketer needs to find the right arguments for the purpose, in this case to sell a product. An example given by Hedlund and Johanesson (1993) is “9 out of 10 movie stars use LUX”, an argument used to sell LUX soap.

The second step in the rhetorical process is called Dipositio and manages the rhetorical structure in the speech from the information that was collected in Inventio. This is done in order for the audience to gain insight by simplifying and explaining the message, (Hedlund & Johanesson, 1993). This is a method used in commercials, since a good structure has the power has to persuade the audience.
The fourth step is Elocutio which rhetoricians use to choose the language that will be the most suitable for their audience. This is also used in marketing in the figures and wording, in order to arouse the desired feelings and make the recipients curious, (Hedlund & Johanesson, 1993), this hopefully leads to a purchase of the product. This can be done by the use of slogans and pictures. Since advertisements do not have any specific execution or need to be memorized by the marketer these steps are erased in the rhetorical process.

2.4 Rhetoric and trust

According to McKean (2003) trust is a fundamental need for customers in order for them to be willing to make a purchase. The customer must feel that the company will deliver the best product at the best appropriate price, but they also need to believe that the company will treat them as individuals in order for them to feel secure enough to purchase the product. For a seller to be able to provide sufficient information, service and show that he or she has enough knowledge about a product is essential in order to gain trust and confidence (McKean, 2003). In order to understand how rhetorical tools can create trust in a personal seller and push the purchase decision forward, the authors have looked into how classical rhetoric is used to create trustworthiness.

One factor that creates trust between two individuals is humility. This is because even though people want to get information and advice from experts, they still want to feel that they can relate to the salesperson and find mutual interests (Werner, 2004). This is something to be critical of due to the electrification of most service features today and the expanding business area of shopping online, where there is no human contact at all. When looking at IKEA, a customer can make a purchase without having any human contact at all in the department stores and still, IKEA is often related to equality. These facts contradict Werner’s (2004) belief, instead the customer might feel a connection towards IKEA as a company, a trust they received through brand loyalty.

There is also a relationship between trust and associations. For several products there are few ways for them to distinguish themselves from the mass, because of the sensory overload that consumers receive through advertisement because of the overwhelming input of information. In order for the customer to gain trust for a certain product, the product has to differentiate itself with the help of associations which can be created by a salesperson and through this create trust for the product and company. (Werner, 2004)

When a customer has gained trust for a company, the customer will be loyal and the trust will remain intact until proven otherwise, similar to friendship. (Evans, Jamal & Foxall, 2009) call this phenomenon “partner quality” which is described as consumers thinking of brands as being able to possess qualities that normally are associated with their partners, i.e. trustworthiness. When trust exists in a relationship between a salesperson and a customer, the relationship will be more durable due to the fact that there are two human beings and feeling involved (McKean, 2003). There are other ways of creating loyalty such as developing a strong brand image, creating clear and precise positioning strategies and by the creation of attachment through loyalty programs (Levy & Weitz, 2009) In the case of IKEA, the authors feel that McKean (2003) and his belief that a relationship should be established is not applicable to this setting, since the customer most probably will meet different sales personnel every time they visit the department store. Instead, IKEA creates loyalty through their loyalty programs (IKEA Family), through their strong brand image and also via their clear position in the market.

When discussing trust, motivation needs to be mentioned. Motivation is the driving force that makes consumers take a particular action, i.e. make a purchase. Evans et al. (2009) separate the external motivation and internal motivation, external motivation is based on what the environment provides such as service and ambiance, when this is well perceived it will lead to an internal motivation such as prefer-
ence of a particular product, (Evans et al, 2009). In other words, good service can lead to preference for a certain product.

Even though it is well known that trust building in a consumer-firm relationship is significant, there are few studies that have examined how businesses behave to build and gain consumer trust. Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol (2002) performed a test to see if there was any correlation between a frontline employee (FLE), management policies and practises (MPP) and trust building. They found correlations between consumer's perception of the operational competence evident in FLE behaviours and FLE trust. They also found that the consumer's perception of the operational benevolence evident in FLE behaviours is positively related to FLE trust (Sirdeshmukh et al, 2002). Through this it can be seen how important the personal seller is in order to generate trust for a business.

Werner (2004) similar to Sirdeshmukh, et al. (2002) also described how important competence and knowledge is to create trust. She states that there are some Ethos related factors in the source (in this case the sales person) that have an effect on how trustworthy the source is perceived to be, an example of this is expert knowledge. People want to think they are talking to experts in the area they are interested in and the more expertise the person seems to possess, the more trust the sales person will gain (Werner, 2004).

2.5 Persuasion

Persuasion is a conscious attempt to influence another person, but for this to be successful the receiver has to be in a mental state that is susceptible to change, according to Perloff (2010). Conger (1998) argues that persuasion entails moving people to a position that they do not currently hold, this is done through the framing of arguments, by presenting supporting evidence and in finding an emotional match with the potential customers.

The logic of persuasion is driven by credibility according to Hart (1997), meaning that most people cannot separate the author from the substance of the message. This is said to be especially true in spoken persuasion where the speaker’s voice, attitude and appearance all interact with what is being said. Conger (1998) agrees with the statement of credibility made by Hart that credibility is vital for a persuader to possess, Conger further claims that the most important sources of credibility are expertise and relationships. Hart (1997) finally states that persuasion lies within people and not with ideas, this may explain why credible speakers can ramble on and become unclear, but still manage to retain their appeal.

2.5.1 Interpersonal persuasion

In interpersonal persuasion it is important to firstly establish a common bond between the communicator and the receiver, a common ground will make it easier to retain the receiver’s attention. Interpersonal persuasion is focused on the techniques implemented to achieve interpersonal objectives, to gain compliance (Perloff, 2010). There are a number of strategies that can be implemented to persuade someone, Perloff (2010) mentions four set groupings of persuasion tactics. These persuasion tactics offer an excellent means in which persuasion attempts from personal sellers can be evaluated in a selling interaction.

The first set of strategies is the direct and the in-direct techniques, the direct techniques include assertion, such as loudly voicing one’s wishes, while the in-direct tactics entail that emotional targeting takes place, such as putting the other person in a good mood. Conger (1998) mentions that a common American perception of persuasion is that it begins with the persuader strongly stating their position, followed by supporting arguments, then facts are given assertively and the final step was said to be the
closure of the persuasion. This it may work well in an American sales setting but assertive and demanding behavior will most likely fail in a Swedish setting, since Swedish people are not used to that type of persuasion and will most likely be offended.

The second group available to persuade someone are the rational and non-rational arguments, rational arguments use reason (logical arguing) and the exchange of favors, whereas the non-rational techniques implement deceit (lying or talking fast) and the use of threats. A statement that is in line with the rational arguments mentioned by Perloff (2010) is Persson (2002) who states that a positive approach of persuasion is the use of Logos where persuasion and influence attempts are made on an intellectual or logical level, usually some kind of proof is given as evidence of the argument. However the use of deceit in persuasion will most likely be seen as unethical and will more than likely have negative repercussions for the business as a whole. According to Solomon et al (2010) negative word of mouth is weighed more heavily by consumers, than positive remarks are, this can create a bad reputation for a business using deceptive persuasion.

The third grouping of strategies is the hard and soft tactics, the hard strategies entail verbal aggression and demanding, whilst the soft tactics use kindness, flirting and flattery. The last set of arguments used in interpersonal persuasion is the dominance and the non-dominance based. The techniques that are dominance based put emphasis on the power that the communicator has over the receiver. The non-dominance tactics have a more egalitarian approach including being open to compromising. These techniques can all be cross-categorized with each other e.g. direct, rational and hard. (Perloff, 2010).

2.6 Communication

Effective communication is “the interchange of thoughts, facts, emotions and information between two or more people that results in mutual understanding – the meeting of minds”, according to Wrice (2002, pp.31-32). Wrice (2002) found that there are generally four objectives that can be achieved through communication these are: to be understood, to understand others, to gain acceptance – for ourselves or our ideas and to produce action – to get others to take action e.g. to purchase a particular product. Communication does not only involve the actual words that are being said, communication also involves body language and facial expression. In order to accurately interpret what is being communicated, both the wording in the message and the non-verbal communication has to be taken into account. (Wrice, 2002)

In non-verbal communication it is crucial to remember that facial expressions show a lot more than one might think. It is vital to create a positive environment that enables communication, since people are more willing to listen to someone who is friendly. The tone and speed at which something is communicated is as important as what is being said. The phrase “A picture paints a thousand words” is quite telling and so are facial expressions (Wrice, 2002). By being able to evaluate the non-verbal communication through body language and facial expressions, approximate attitudes will emerge for the observer. The framework of non-verbal communication is included in this study in order to have a base for evaluating how the customers respond to the sellers in the sales interactions, to see what influence the sellers have on the customers’ attitudes.

2.6.1 Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal behavior such as body language and facial expressions are a vital part of how humans interact and communicate, being able to observe and understand this are valuable skills especially in people oriented professions (Adams & Jones, 2011). According to Adams and Jones (2011) the body’s natural position is when your hands are relaxed at your sides, all other bodily positions have a meaning.
Another reason why non-verbal communication is so powerful and useful to be able to understand, is that words do not always tell the truth. Argyle (1988) found that non-verbal signals are less easily controlled and mostly assumed to be genuine. This entails that if the verbal message is conflicting with the body language, the body language is most likely the more genuine, since it is much harder to manipulate.

Facial expressions are the most important non-verbal channel, especially for expressing attitudes towards other people as well as emotions, as stated by Argyle (1988) Facial expressions and some interpersonal attitudes are nearly portrayed identically. One of the most vital interpersonal attitudes, liking is expressed in the exact same way that the emotion happiness is. Argyle (1988) also found that when persuasive behavior was taking place there was more facial activity. During interaction between two people the face is very active and smiling was found to be a powerful source of reward (Argyle, 1988). This would entail that if one wanted to change another person’s attitude towards a more positive state more smiling and facial activity would help. Argyle mentioned earlier that non-verbal signals were less easily controlled but they can still be controlled to some extent, which would mean that smiling or liking does not always have to be genuine.

There are a number of ways to engage in non-verbal communication according to Ruben and Stewart (1998): Gestures (kinetics) which is movements of the head, body, arms and legs. Gestures can be either intentional or incidental, gestures can be used instead of words such as shrugging to indicated uncertainty or a thumbs up to indicate approval. Space (proximity) is focused around the notion of personal space, an invasion of personal space will always lead to a response, usually a repositioning to create the space that is needed. The amount on space that is needed depends on culture, age of the concerned individual, setting, attitudes and feelings of the individual. (Ruben & Stewart, 1998).

Argyle (1988) mentions that the most important signals for liking are: proximity - when someone comes closer or leans in, facial expression for liking is when more smiling occurs, gestures that accompany liking are head nods and lively movements. The posture that takes place in a liking situation is an open posture with arms stretched towards each other or arms at the side. From these quite clear non-verbal activities a person’s attitude can be more easily spotted and evaluated.

Postures can also reveal emotions such as interest, when interest is shown a person leans forward. However if the person is bored the head will be lowered, the person will lean back or turn away the head, all these features indicate reduced attentiveness, (Argyle, 1988).

An interesting finding of Argyle’s (1988) was that when subjects are in disagreement they are more inclined to fold their arms, support their head on one hand and to cross the legs tightly above the knee, postures of disagreement are seemingly defensive and the body crosses as a response to threat. Through the findings Argyle made of disagreement, negative attitudes and non–liking behavior, these can now become more apparent for the observers.

2.7 Personal selling

Selling is one of the oldest professions in the world, at present most sales people are well educated and well-trained. Sales people must listen to customers, assess the customer needs and help solve the problem for the customer, according to Kotler et al (2008). The actual interaction in personal selling involves a two-way personal communication between the sales people and the customers, a benefit of having sales people is that they can probe customers in order to learn more about the problems at hand and there after adjust the marketing offers to fit the current situation, as stated by Kotler et al (2008).
The personal selling concept is consistent with modern marketing in that the selling process is dependent on how well the salesperson can identify and satisfy customer needs, according to Szymanski (1988). Furthermore by providing a product desired by the customers the salesperson increases the likelihood that a sale will occur. Once customer needs have been identified, the probability of a sale happening will increase by demonstrating how the products satisfy the needs of the customer (Szymanski, 1988).

Weitz (1978) found that performance in sales was related to the salespersons ability to obtain a correct impression of the customer’s values and beliefs. This implies that the more perceptive the seller is to the needs of the customer, the more satisfied the customer will be and the seller will be high performing in terms of sales.

It was found by Kidwell et al (2007) that it is vital for sellers to be able to understand the emotional responses of their customers in the sales interaction, this information can then be used to achieve a desired outcome for the customer. If the customer is feeling frustrated by product features and displaying signs of anxiety the seller who perceives this emotional state can make the customer feel more at ease and potentially make them feel more willing to ask questions, Kidwell et al (2007). A seller with good perception of emotions can use the information to adapt the content and delivery style of the sales message to the specific emotional state of the customer. The ability to sense emotion gives the seller the ability to place themselves in the buyer position and thus they will be able to more accurately meet customer needs. (Kidwell et al, 2007).

Sales people in general can offer customers advice, guidance and expert knowledge. Sellers need to be able to communicate a product’s benefits and features, the features are the tangible measurable characteristics e.g. brand or price, as stated by Wrice (2002). Whereas product benefits answer the question “what does this product do for me?” Product benefits include safety, status or value for money. The benefits can either be emotional or rational, an emotional benefit for a alarm system could be peace of mind, while a rational benefit for the same product is protection of the car, Wrice (2002). When communicating product benefits it would seem appropriate that rhetorical tools could be used. Persson (2002) argues that in Pathos “proof” should be given in the arguments and that the proof can in fact be an expert opinion, which most sellers should possess. When describing emotional benefits the use of Pathos will most likely be a helpful tool for personal sellers, Lindqvist (2008) argues that the success of using Pathos depends on the speakers ability to create appropriate feelings.

Customer oriented selling was defined by Szymanski (1988, p.65) as “the degree to which salespeople practice the marketing concept by trying to help customers make purchase decision that will satisfy customer needs.” This statement is in line with the notion mentioned below by Kotler et al (2008) that there is a trend towards more customer focus. Kotler et al (2008) mention that a shift has occurred in personal selling and that the process is moving towards an objective of producing customer value as well as firm profit, there is a trend towards more market orientation and the sales personnel are becoming more customer focused. Kotler et al (2008) also point out that a market oriented sales force will be more effective in the long run, by creating long term profitable relationships with the customers.

An increasingly popular way that personal selling can build and maintain a competitive advantage is by developing a close and co-operative relationship with a limited number of customers, suppliers and channels according to Weitz and Bradford, (1999). Also mentioned by Weitz and Bradford (1999) is that a large number of marketing scholars suggest that relationship marketing, which focuses on activities that establish and maintain long term cooperative relationships is the new way of marketing. The salespeople have key roles in the development of long-term relationships, the sellers can influence the buyer’s perception of the firms reliability, the value of the products offered and most importantly the buyers interest in maintaining the relationship (Weitz & Bradford, 1999).
2.7.1 Salesperson credibility

Source credibility was defined as “credibility is the degree to which a communication source or channel is perceived as trustworthy and competent by the receiver” (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971 as cited in Sharma, 1990, p.71). Source credibility in general has three determinants according to Fisher, Ilgen and Hoyer (1979) the first of these is trust, someone whose motives and intentions are trusted is more likely to be accepted than a person who is blatantly trying to persuade you to do something. The second factor according to Fischer et al (1979) that affected credibility was expertise, it is more likely that people will listen to someone who is perceived to be knowledgeable on the topic at hand. The final aspect mentioned by Fischer et al (1979) that affects the credibility level is whether or not you like the person, people are more likely to think of a friend as a credible source of information, than someone they don’t know. Both credibility and trust depend to some extent on the level of expertise held by the sellers, this can be seen both in the statements made by Fischer et al above as in the claim by Werner (2004) who also mentions that as the level of perceived expertise that a salesperson possess, increases the level of trust from the customers increases. This stresses the importance of having sales staff that exhibit an adequate level of expertise.

Credibility is subjective, which entails that it is perceived by the receiver and has no objective criteria. The higher credibility a source is thought to have the more receptive the receiver will be to messages from that source, as stated by Sharma (1990). The study by Sharma (1990) also showed that the two most important variables in source credibility were trust and expertise, the study also suggested that a highly credible salesperson will have a positive effect on attitude change and the level of persuasion that is possible.

Sharma (1990) found that the level of source credibility with regard to purchase intention and attitude depend on whether the receivers have had prior experiences with the product or previous expectations of the brand. These expectations are developed in the buyers earlier experiences with the product or brand, it can also be based on communication from friends or other sources of information. The final conclusion that can be drawn from the study by Sharma (1990) is that salesperson credibility when brand expectations were low had a direct effect on product evaluation and buying intention. If the sales person was seen as credible it increased the likelihood of a purchase when brand expectations were low, however this did not have as big an impact if the buyer had high brand expectations.

2.8 IKEA

IKEA Jönköping consists of two levels. On the first level the entrance, playhouse for kids, IKEA Food shop, checkout counters, exits, and the majority of the movable products such as the china, plants and kitchenware are found. On this level there are a small number of customers that seek out sellers for help because of the kinds of products that are available on this floor. On the top floor there is a restaurant and the showrooms and it is here that most of the personal selling takes place. There are four major sections on the top floor, kitchen, bedroom, office and living room. In the kitchen department there are many customers that need help to assemble a kitchen and in the office section there are many business’ that purchase the products. In the bedroom and living room section many customers need advice or help from the personal sellers. The customers mostly have questions about which bed is most suitable for them or which sofa is the best fit. Malm (2011, personal communication)

IKEA is trying to minimize the need for personal selling in their department stores. This is done by having labels on all merchandise that shows the customer which colours, sizes etc. the merchandise is available in. In addition to this, IKEA attempts to educate all customers that this service is available by showing them how to interpret the information on the labels when questions that can be answered through these labels are asked to a sales person. IKEA have introduced a self-scanning system that en-
ables customer to achieve their entire shopping experience at IKEA without talking any sales personnel. They also have a planning tool on their homepage which allows customer to plan and combine kitchen and bathroom layouts, according to Helena Malm (2011, personal communication).

Figure 3 shows that even though IKEA strive to make it possible for their customers to shop at IKEA Jönköping without receiving service from a single sales person, they want to have a high quality in their personal selling service when needed. In addition, they want their sales personnel to have the ability to add-on sell and always strive to identify the real need of the customer in order to make them as satisfied with their purchases as possible, as stated by Helena Malm (2011, personal communication).

2.8.1 IKEA selling process

IKEA’s sales process differentiates itself compared to the normal sales process due to their unique selling service for those customers who require help. Even though a customer can manage to do their shopping without assistance from the personal sellers, IKEA strives to make all sales personnel actively seek out customers in the departments. Therefore the first step in IKEA’s selling process is for the personal sellers to approach customers that are showing buying signals. The second step in the sales process is for the sales person to locate the real need of the customer, in order to satisfy the customer in the best way. An example of this is that the seller should identify the actual need and not just show the product the customer asks for e.g. when a customer asks for a bed the seller should find out how it will be used, daily or occasionally. (Malm, 2011, personal communication)

After the need has been discovered the seller needs to demonstrate and argue for the different selling points of the products. The sales person should also try to add-on sell either throughout the interaction or just before closing the sales, this is the fourth step according to, this is one of the most vital aspects of the selling process at IKEA Jönköping. The final step of the IKEA sales process is the closing of the sales, this however does not end with the customer’s payment, instead it ends with the sellers printing a purchase order for the customer (what shelf to find the products) according to Helena Malm (2011, personal communication).

2.9 Model of rhetoric in personal selling

In order to shortly summarize the most important aspects of the theoretical framework and further show how rhetoric and personal selling are linked together, the authors have constructed a model.
model will show the relationship between Ethos and credibility, Pathos and trust and finally Logos and expertise. Credibility, trust and expertise are all vital to personal selling, while Ethos, Pathos and Logos are the three corner stones of rhetoric. This model will further support why the relationship between personal selling and rhetoric should be researched, thus showing the value of this thesis.

When a speech is conducted all three means of persuasion should be included in order to contribute to increase the level of persuasion. Ethos is the first mean of persuasion and is said to be the character of the speaker. According to Rydstedt (1993) the speaker needs to be seen as credible by the audience and to do this the speaker should create a sense of belonging with the audience, this trust can be created through the use of “Us arguments”. Hauser (1986) furthermore states that if the speaker has special expertise through training the audience will have a higher level of confidence for the speaker.

Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) stated that source credibility was the level to which the source was perceived as trustworthy and knowledgeable by the audience. The more credibility a speaker is thought to have, the more open to the message the receiver will become according to Sharma (1990). Ethos will be effected by both by the traits of the personal seller and the credibility of the business the seller is associated with, in order for a customer to believe the business to be credible both the seller and the reputation and brand of the company have to be seen as credible.

Pathos is the second mean of persuasion and handles the feelings created for the audience by the speaker, thus it treats what emotional state the speaker creates. In order for the speaker to achieve the effect wanted, he or she must know the psychological factors that will have an impact on the audience, thus the main point of Pathos is to understand the feelings of the audience and use them to persuade through the use of feelings and emotions (Lindqvist, 2008). A statement by Kidwell et al (2007) claim that understanding the emotions of the customers in the personal selling process is vital for sellers, if these emotions can be interpreted correctly the seller can adjust the message to fit the customer. This enables the seller to more precisely meet the customers needs, by discovering the customers actual needs the level of trust is likely to increase.

Trust is said to be a fundamental need in personal selling because a customer needs to gain trust for the company, and the product, in order for them to go through with their purchase (McKean, 2003). Trust can be created through showing sufficient product knowledge but also by giving associations. Through giving associations, the seller will create a feeling (Pathos) and will through this gain the trust of the customer. An association can also be a tool for distinguishing the product from the mass, which also will lead to the customer gaining trust that this product will be the best product for their need, and purchase the products. This shows a clear link between creating emotions (Pathos) and the need for trust in the selling process.

Logos is the third and last mean of persuasion which is the argumentation, and by convincing the audience on a more intellectual level. Logos should use facts and give them more meaning through the use of rhetoric (Persson, 2002). The speaker should also give the arguments more meaning by giving the audience “proof”, the proof does not have to be scientific but can also be essays and public addresses (Hauser, 1986). Concerning personal selling at IKEA, an argument and a proof could sound like” This sofa is of very good quality, we will give you a 10 year warranty”.

Since Logos is not about inventing facts, a sales person must be knowledgeable in his area in order to provide arguments for the customer but also proof that will support these, he or she must show expertise (Persson, 2002). Therefore expertise is a valuable asset to the sales persons when creating arguments (Logos) and through this persuades the customers to purchase the product or service. A clear link can be seen between Logos, expertise and personal selling which further supports the model.
3 Methodology

This chapter describes the research process by illustrating the study and the methods chosen by showing how the observations and interviews are structured and executed. It also discusses the trustworthiness of the study and the challenges that were faced.

3.1 Research design

Throughout the development of this thesis, the purpose was to investigating the relationship between rhetoric and personal selling at IKEA Jönköping. In order to fulfil the purpose of the study the authors saw a need to discover how IKEA Jönköping’s customers responded to the different rhetorical approaches or tools used by the sales people and how the customers’ attitude towards the sales personnel can change through the use of these tools. Also the authors believe that an understanding of the sales interaction between the customer and the sales personnel is needed. The theories used in this study will serve as a foundation for the evaluation of the phenomenon at IKEA and are to a great extent based on how the speaker or salesperson uses the rhetorical tools in order to persuade the audience or customer. The methods used were carefully chosen in order to be able to understand the phenomenon of rhetoric and to be able to find answers to the purpose of this thesis and for IKEA Jönköping.

To be able to understand and analyse the sales interactions the authors believe that observations would be most relevant, this is because the observations will give an opportunity to observe the sales interaction as they occur in its natural environment. In order to see how the observations correspond to how the customers perceive the sales interactions, interviews were conducted after the observations. When choosing the observation and interview techniques there are numerous questions that need to be answered before starting the process, these will be discussed and answered below.

When choosing a research approach there are two main alternatives to choose from, induction or deduction according Saunders, Lewis and Thornill (2009). When using a deductive research approach the literature reviewed helps to identify the theories and ideas that will be used when evaluating the collected
primary data. Jacobsen (2002) states that deduction is the strategy that takes the course from theory to empirics. The second research approach which is available is the inductive approach in which the researcher explores the data collected and develops theories based on the data. This approach starts without having any predefined theories or conceptual frameworks as stated by Saunders et al, (2009). Malhotra and Birks, (2006) state that induction has little or no theoretical framework, theories are seen as restricting the researcher’s perspective, issues of interest are either observed or seen in particular contexts, theories are developed by searching for occurrences and interactions of phenomenon.

This thesis is neither absolutely deductive nor inductive, but it can be said to lean more towards an inductive approach since the phenomenon of rhetoric in personal sales is not extensively researched and thus theories and ideas were not easily accessible to be used as a tool in the evaluation of the primary data. However it is not purely inductive either since theories were used to generate a framework for the collection of the primary data, so abduction seems like a suitable approach in this study. Relevant theory was used as a tool to gather an understanding of the phenomenon and to create a framework to be used in the empirical data gathering.

Abduction proceeds from empirical data like induction does, but abduction does not reject theoretical concepts and thus can be seen as a combination of induction and deduction, as stated by Alvesson and Sköldberg (1994). This approach means that the empirical data can be combined with or be preceded by studies in the researched literature, the literature of previous studies is used as inspiration for patterns that will lead to an understanding of the investigated phenomenon, as mentioned by Alvesson and Sköldberg (1994).

Since this study is more inductive than deductive a qualitative data collection method was used in the gathering of the primary data. According to Saunders et al (2009) the emphasis of an inductive research approach uses qualitative data. Qualitative research approaches are often used in order to gain a deeper understanding of cultural values and consumer behavior e.g. through the use of interviewing or observation, as stated by Malhotra and Birks (2006). Furthermore qualitative techniques are sensitive enough to capture detail in consumer behaviours, motives and attitudes, according to Malhotra and Birks, (2006). This is the reason this study has chosen to proceed with both observations and semi-structured interviews, since the tools chosen for the investigation of the phenomenon need to possess the ability to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and these two options are also sensitive enough to capture nuances in behaviour. Bell (2006) claims that qualitative perspectives are often used in order to investigate how people perceive the world and that the end objective is often insight into a phenomenon. Which in this case is a good fit for the purpose of this thesis where the aim is to gain insight into the phenomenon of rhetoric in personal sales, namely how rhetoric is used in sales interactions and how the sales interactions could be improved through the use of rhetoric.

This study will use a qualitative approach since it investigates a distinct phenomenon that has not previously been extensively researched. Observations at IKEA Jönköping will be used to capture how rhetoric is used in the personal selling interactions between employees and customer. Once these observations have been analyzed semi-structured interviews with current IKEA customers will take place. This order is held so that the phenomenon discovered during the observations can be included in the interviews. In the interviews that were conducted it was crucial for the study to be able to understand
customer attitudes towards IKEA and to capture customer behaviours. Another positive aspect that the qualitative data collection brought was the fact that the authors could probe customer answers further than would have been possible if a quantitative approach had been used.

3.2 Observation

There are numerous techniques that can be used in order to investigate a phenomenon, including observation techniques. When discussing different methods to be used in this thesis, IKEA Jönköping gave the opportunity to find and present the most appropriate method for investigating the phenomenon at hand. By being able to freely, with approval from IKEA Jönköping, choose the method for the thesis, the authors received a unique opportunity with a huge access to the company. This unique insight into the natural environment of IKEA gave the opportunity to see the personal sellers and customers in interactions that provided excellent primary data for the further analysis of the phenomenon.

This thesis concentrates on how the personal selling works in the living room and bedroom section on the top floor. These two sections have been chosen since there are a high number of sales interactions between the customers and the personal sellers and also because the sales interaction are of a good length for the study’s purpose. Malm (2011, personal communication)

The major advantage with doing observations was that it will more accurately reflect the real behaviour and not a “preferred” behaviour also, resulting in a lower risk of biased answers coming from the observed sales personnel and customers. (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). These biases might have been a problem if the phenomenon had been measured by other techniques, e.g. interviews, since the sales personnel at IKEA Jönköping most probably want to show the management that they are doing a “good job” and therefore report a preferred behaviour. By the use of the observation, these biases will be eliminated.

Another advantage of the observations is that there are patterns and behaviours that can be measured by observations, and no other technique, since the respondents observed are unaware of these patterns (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). Since a salesperson has numerous sales interactions each day it might be difficult to look at them from an objective point of view and answer questions about the sales interaction accurately. Therefore observations are needed in order to look beyond how the sales person understands the sales interaction and observe if from a more objective point of view.

There are disadvantages with observation methods as well, the biggest according to Malhotra and Birks (2006) is the fact that the observed behaviour is hard to determine because of the underlying motives. Another disadvantage is the extent to which the observers themselves can evaluate their own biases and how their biases can affect the result. There are also disadvantages concerning that observations can be time consuming, expensive and sometimes unethical (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). The authors are striving to eliminate these disadvantages by being well aware of their own biases and search for ethical codes of conduct before constructing the observation. Even though the method of observation is time consuming, the results will most probably capture the phenomenon accurately and therefore the authors are willing to spend more time on the data collection in order to receive a better outcome.

The biggest advantage of being able to conduct observations at IKEA Jönköping is that the observations will more accurately mirror the real phenomenon (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). To be able to conduct this type of observation is a major opportunity since many companies are reluctant to allow outsiders to observe their sales personnel, because of ethical concerns but also to protect the privacy of the company.
3.3 Sample

Due to the chosen method used, observations, the authors strive to investigate how rhetoric effects personal selling at IKEA Jönköping. Therefore the population chosen are the customers and personal sellers at IKEA Jönköping. In order to obtain information about this population a sub sample will be studied. The targeted population that is of relevance for this research is customers of IKEA Jönköping whom interact with the sales personal at the living room and bedroom departments. A non-probability sampling technique will be used and it relies on the personal judgement of the researchers and not chance in the selection of the sample, the researcher consciously chooses what elements to include in the sample according to Malhotra and Birks (2006).

Convenience sampling tries to attain a sample of convenient variables. The selection of these variables is left up to the researcher. Usually the included respondents are chosen because they are “in the right place at the right time” as stated by Malhotra and Birks (2006). Furthermore Malhotra and Birks (2006) state that convenience sampling is the least time consuming and the least expensive, another positive aspect of this sampling strategy is that the sampled units are easily accessible. The choice to use convenience sampling is based on the criteria that it should be the least time consuming as possible and since both the observations and interviews took place in a fixed location with the population constituting IKEA customers it made the most sense to choose a sample of convenience.

As already mentioned the observations took place in a fixed location, namely the living room and bedroom departments and the semi-structured interviews took place after the cashiers at the IKEA department store in Jönköping. The variables chosen to be included in the selection of convenience sample variables are customers whom seek out the personal selling staff at IKEA Jönköping, customers looking for directions or other simple information were excluded from the observations. And for the interviews only customers who had received help from the personal sellers were included in the sample. The bedroom and living room departments were chosen and approved in co-operation with the local IKEA marketing manager and sales manager. The kitchen and bathroom departments were excluded from the observations due to the fact that the sales interactions are more of a process and IKEA only granted permission for the observations to be conducted in the living room and bedroom departments.

3.3.1 Observation technique

When looking at observational techniques there are four classifications made by Malhotra and Birks (2006). These are personal observation, electronic observation, audit and trace analysis and they are compared by different criterion in table 10.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Personal Observation</th>
<th>Electronic Observation</th>
<th>Audit</th>
<th>Trace analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of structure</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low to High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of disguise</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Low to High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Setting</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low to High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation bias</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis bias</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low to Medium</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The chosen method in this thesis is personal observations. The personal observation method was mainly chosen because it has a medium degree of disguise and is highly ranked when there is a need to observe the phenomenon in its natural setting. People tend to behave differently when being aware that they are being observed and not being in their natural environment, the observers will be disguised in official IKEA trainee clothes and observe the behaviour as it occurs in the natural environment at IKEA Jönköping. This will lead to a result and an outcome that will more accurately reflect the true phenomenon (Malhotra & Birks, 2006).

There is medium degree of disguise in the personal observation because a person must be close enough to the phenomenon to be able to observe it, but can in addition hide or be disguised in other ways. According to Czarniawska (2007) there is a need to blend in when a researcher does not want to attract attention to the shadowing activity and this can be achieved by wearing working clothes. The observers were issued trainee clothes from IKEA, these clothes were not as “visible” as the ordinary sales clothes worn by the IKEA staff, but even though these clothes were worn, the observers faced the problem of being mistaken for a sales person.

There are also disadvantages with the personal observation, such as the analysis bias and observation bias is high and also the low degree of structure (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). In order to attempt to decrease the high biases of the observer and analysis, the authors made a questionnaire of multiple choice questions that were answered by the observers after every sales interaction. This questionnaire will contribute to a higher structure of all the observations and the analysis of the sales interaction will be consistent by use of the same structured questions. This also minimized the interruption in the sales interaction and decreased the curiosity that can be created in the customers if the observers were to take notes during the meeting. The questionnaire used will be further explained below.

Other observation methods that were discussed were trace analysis which has a higher degree of disguise. This method was not chosen because the low points in the criteria of observing in the natural setting, which the authors perceived to be highly relevant to observe this phenomenon. The authors also discussed the electronic observation because of the high disguise that can be achieved by hiding a camera and observing the behaviour in its natural setting. There are ethical codes that state that in order to audit a person they should be aware of the audit, and also the high cost of the method. The high cost and the ethical dilemma made the authors chose not to proceed with an audit. The authors saw the importance of observing the phenomenon in the natural environment and for the customers that will be observed not to be aware that they were. (Malhotra & Birks, 2006)

### Observation documentation

As stated above the observers used a structured “checklist” or questionnaire that was filled out after every sales interaction in order to minimize interruptions during the sales meetings and to not disturb the customer or sales personnel during the meeting. The checklist is structured like a questionnaire because it should be easy to fill out. Even though the questionnaires were made in order to not disturb the salesperson during the sales meeting, after the sales meeting many of the sales personnel lost focus their new customers, because they were trying to see what the questionnaires included when they were being filled out by the observers. This resulted in many of the sales personnel asking the observers what questions were included in the questionnaire and when their questions were not answered by the ob-
servers, many of the staff became even more curious and sometimes a negative atmosphere was created.

When using questionnaires there are two types of question structures that can be used, namely unstructured and structured questions, unstructured are open ended questions with an advantage that enables the respondents to express their opinions and attitudes towards the question, the disadvantage with the unstructured questions is that it is expensive and time consuming to code the answers (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). The structured questions have a fixed set of response alternatives, in this study these will be dichotomous answers.

When measuring the different parts of the personal selling interaction dichotomous questions will mainly be used, according to Malhotra and Birks (2006) these are questions that only have two response alternatives e.g. yes or no, agree and disagree, these two alternatives are often supplemented by a neutral alternative. Dichotomous questions are the easiest kind of question to code and analyze, as stated by Malhotra and Birks (2006). Since the researchers are the observers and the one’s filling out the observation checklist it makes most sense to have yes and no alternatives for the fixed sets of questions, these are supplemented by a neutral alternative. Since the observation and evaluation of a personal sales interaction is subjective it will clearly reduce observer bias by having fixed yes and no answers. Judging someone else’s emotions or attitudes is very difficult, only the person experiencing the emotions can accurately state the precise feeling on a scale, therefore dichotomous questions and responses will be used in the observation checklist.

Since the observations were executed by the authors, there was a clear knowledge of what to look at during the sales interaction and a minimum of time between the observations and the documentation, in order for the authors to remember all the details of the interactions. Since the authors made the observations at IKEA during one week, there was a substantial amount of observations to analyze and because of this, open ended questions would be too time consuming to analyze. Therefore structured questions are the most suitable choice for these observations, it will also help to keep the expenses low. For observation checklist see appendix)

3.3.3 Challenges during the observations

During the observations the authors came across various challenges. One challenge that was noticed 10 minutes before the observations were going to start was an ethical concern. Helena Malm, the marketing manager at IKEA Jönköping, informed the observers that before any observations could take place, they were obligated to inform all concerned sales personnel about the study and get their approval to continue with the observations. This was a fact that the authors were concerned about since the observers were trespassing on the sales personnel’s territory and their workplace. Luckily no sales personnel during the week were reluctant to participate in the observations, even though there were some sales persons who were more positive towards the study than others.

The next challenge came when the observations of the personal sellers began. During one week, 112 observations were made which gave the observers and the personal sellers a lot of time together. The observers tried not to talk about the observations, except when the sales persons asked questions that concerned them. The more comfortable the sales persons got in the observers company, the more questions they received and the more the sales person tried to peek at the questionnaires. The observers explained that by revealing the questions, the sales persons would pay more attention to what the questions included and the observations would not be as effective and ultimately become biased. There were also some occasions when the observers had to hold the papers close to their bodies (to hide them from the sales personnel) and clearly explain that it was not intended for the sales persons to see.
Another challenge that soon became clear was the difficulty in “shadowing” the customer and sales persons in order to observe the sales interaction. The complexity was to be near enough to hear the conversation but also to be far away enough in order not to make the customer feel uncomfortable. When the customer and sales person moved, the observer had to follow but not in such a way that made it obvious that the aim of the move was to get closer to the sales interaction. The observers therefore used their questionnaire papers and pretender to write down information about the sofas and beds in order to move to a sofa/bed which was closer to the conversation between the customer and sales person. This was done in order to make the customer believe that the observers were writing about inventory or other information, instead of shadowing them.

The observers wore official IKEA trainee clothes in order to blend into the environment and not make the customers feel uncomfortable, but there was also a worry of being mistaken for an ordinary employee. The observers tried to avoid eye contact with the customers and did not move around customers that showed buying signals. Even though these tactics were applied, customers still approached the observers with questions. The observers referred the customers to the authentic sales staff and explained that they only were trainees and in order to receive the best services they should speak with another sales person. Even though most customers understood and gladly asked another sales person, a minority of the customers became irritated when the observers could not answer the customer’s questions, which lead these customers to have a negative attitude towards the real salesperson when the interaction started. These interruptions sometimes made it very difficult for the observers to be focused on one observation and not miss any important information during the conversation.

There was also the challenge to not involve any emotions during the observations and through this bias the results. When the observers had worked with different personal sellers for days, there were some sellers that the observers received a better connection with then others. When the observers evaluated sellers that they had received a good connection with, they had to strive against the human factor that “saw” the sellers doing a better job then they actually did. It was sometimes hard to not involve any feelings and truly see the observations from an objective point of view, but by being aware of the potential observer biases, the observers paid attention to the need of an objective viewpoint during all observations.

Another difficulty was to be completely concentrated for 4 straight hours on every new customer in order to look for buying signals and during the sales interaction to not miss any important wording or body signal. By being alert and observant for these long shifts the observers experienced being extremely tired and their concentration weakened. During the first day it therefore became clear that the observers had to take 15 min pause during the 4 hour intervals, in order to clear their minds. During these pauses the observers also discussed sales interactions that stood out from the crowd which made it easier to remember them at the end of the day. They also exchanged tips on how the shadowing could be done in the best way and to avoid customers believing that they were sales persons.

There was also the difficulty of not disturbing the sales interaction or providing the sales persons with tips and feedback. Since the observers were very aware of what the sales persons did and said, it was easier for them to see the wrongs and rights during the sales interaction. As a human reflex, the observers had an urge to give them feedback in order to improve their next sales interaction, especially when a relationship was established between the observer and the seller. When the customers asked for help or tips, there was also a natural reflex to want to help them if the observers had the knowledge, but instead, they had to pretend that they did not know and referred them to the sales personnel.
3.4 Ethical concerns in observations

When executing the observation the authors have considered the International code of marketing and social research provided by ESOMAR and International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). The code was published in order to foster public confidence through demonstrating the researcher’s ethical and professional responsibility. This resulted in honest and trustworthy information given by the public during marketing research, something the researcher depends upon. (ESOMAR/ICC, 2007)

In article 1 the basic principles are shown. These principles state that the research shall be legal, honest, truthful and objective and be carried out in accordance with appropriate scientific principles or will make the public loose confidence in marketing research, conducted with professional responsibility and be distinguished from non-research activity (ESOMAR/ICC, 2007). These are all ethical codes that the authors of this research have followed.

In Article 6 ESOMAR/ICC have stated the responsible person for recording and observation techniques as; “Respondents shall be informed before observation techniques or recording equipment are used for research purposes, except where these are openly used in a public place and no personal data is collected. If respondents’ so wish, the record or relevant section of it shall be destroyed or deleted. In the absence of explicit consent respondents’ personal identity shall be protected” (ESOMAR/ICC, 2007)

During the observation, no personal data was collected from the customer nor from sales personnel and the observation occurred at IKEA Jönköping, a public place and therefore the researcher are not obligated by the ethical code, to inform the sales person or the customer about the observation. Information was not given by the authors since this might influence the customer or sales person and provide a distorted picture of the real phenomenon.

IKEA Jönköping informed all of their employees when and how the observations would take place and that it would be anonymous. They also informed the employee that was the local representative for the labour union of the observations that were to take place and this employee also made sure that the rules and practices of the labour union were followed. The observers gave every employee an opportunity to decline to be a part of the observations by introducing themselves and explaining the purpose of the observations before every meeting with a new employee. Even though the observers could not disclose the questions on the questionnaire to the employees, they explained that the main topics were rhetoric and how it affects the sales interaction. There were no sales people during the observations that refused to be observed, most of them seemed positive to the observations.

There was only one sales person during the week of observations that showed a negative attitude towards the observations and the observers. Even though this sales person did not give any straight forward criticism against the observations that would take place and agreed to be a part of it, he or she showed dissatisfaction by questioning the “real” purpose of the observations and by being unsocial and bitter towards the observers.

3.5 Semi–structured interviews

The second part of the primary data collection will employ a non-standardized interview technique which will be a one-to-many type of interview, namely semi-structured interviews. According to Saunders et al (2009) when examining attitudes and opinions a qualitative interview technique is required. When questions are complex or open-ended it is preferable to use a qualitative interview technique, this also enables the researcher to have a complex set questions or questions that are open-ended, as stated by Saunders et al (2009). The use of open-ended questions allows the respondents to describe a situation and it is also designed to encourage the participants to give extensive answers and it is used to re-
veal attitudes towards a specific situation, as stated by Saunders et al (2009). Furthermore performing qualitative interviews also gives the opportunity to probe the answers given by the respondents, it enables further explanations into a set question, as noted by Saunders et al (2009).

After the observations had been carried out and analyzed, interviews with IKEA Jönköping customers were performed. This was done in order to see if there was a gap in how the customers perceive the sales personnel and what their needs are, from what IKEA Jönköping thinks their customers’ needs are. This will provide an opportunity to improve the quality of the salesmanship at IKEA in the observed departments. It also provided IKEA with the opportunity to ask more in-depth questions to customers who were not biased, as perhaps focus groups can be, participants in focus group usually receive a gift voucher or some other incentive for them to participate which may bias the answers.

Bell (2006) states that one advantage of semi-structured interviews are that they are easily compiled and analyzed due to the fact that structured questionnaires are used to take down the answers. The data collected will be recorded using a fixed list of questions and the respondents answers will be recorded on the structured checklist by the interviewers. (For interview questions see appendix)

Elimination questions were asked to participants in the interviews to make sure that only customers who had received help from the personal sellers were included in the interview sample. The interviewers were positioned after the checkout counters in close proximity to the cafeteria, this was a good location that has historically been used for other marketing research purposes by IKEA Jönköping, according to Malm (2011, personal communication).

3.5.1 Challenges during the interviews

One of the main difficulties that the interviewers faced during this stage of the data collection was getting customers to participate in the interviews. The majority of the customers whom were asked to participate in the interviews were unwilling. One of the issues why people did not want to participate was probably because they could spot the interviewers while waiting in line for the cashiers and had time to make up an excuse as to why they could not or did not want to participate. The most frequent excuses were lack of time and stress.

The interviewers tried to overcome the customer’s reluctance by explaining that the interview would only take three minutes, the interviewers took of their jackets to blend in with the crowd and told the customers that the interviews were in co-operation with IKEA, but unfortunately nothing increased the customer’s willingness to participate. The authors then tried to create a more personal atmosphere between themselves and the customers by start the conversation with “My name is…I am a student at Jönköping International Business School…could you please help me with my master thesis”. This was done in order for the customer to see a “student that was working on their thesis” in front of them and not just “another interviewer” and suddenly the customers became more willing to participate.

Another major hurdle was that more than half of the people who were actually willing to be interviewed had not had any help from the sales personnel and had to be eliminated from the sample. This made finding people who could be included in the sample and whom were willing to participate very time consuming, this fact also resulted in fewer interviews than anticipated being performed. The interviewers therefore focused on customers leaving IKEA with big boxes that indicated them having made a purchase of a bigger product (larger purchases often require assistance from the sales staff).

When the customers started to respond to the interviews, another obstacle emerged. The interviewers found out that many respondents answered the fixed questions with remarkably neutral answers. Instead of answering yes or no, many customers answered “a little bit” or “maybe”.

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The interviewers explained in the beginning of the interactions that the interviews were anonymous and the purpose was to discover how the customer felt about the sales service provided by the IKEA sales staff, in order to improve it. This increased the willingness to answer in a more straight forward manner and did not bias the interview answers.

A matter that became very apparent was that many of the people who took time to participate in the interviews had most likely been to university themselves and probably helped out because they themselves had been in the same position as the interviewers.

Even though the majority of the asked customers chose not to participate in the interviews the interviewers still had to keep their spirits high and continue to be friendly and positive. One of the interviewers got hit by a trolley and cursed at while interviewing an elderly couple, but still had to continue with the interview and keep a straight face.

3.5.2 Ethical concerns for interviews

There are two main ethical components according to Bell (2006) that need to be followed in all academic research and these are anonymity, which entails that the respondents or participants are anonymous and the researcher does not know what response was given by which participant. And the second ethical component mentioned is confidentiality, Bell (2006) describes this as a promise that the participants cannot be identified or described in such a manner that they could be identified.

With regards to ethics in semi-structured interviews Bell (2006) mentions a number of factors that must be taken into consideration, it is the responsibility of the researchers to attain the consent of the participants prior to the interview taking place. Bell (2006) furthermore states that the interviewers are responsible for explaining what the purpose of the research is, why the researchers would like to interview the respondents. The interviewers must also beforehand mention the type of questions that will be asked and clearly explain how the information provided by the respondents will be used.

The interviewers in this study informed the interviewees that their participation was completely anonymous and confidential and the guidelines by Bell (2006) were followed. The purpose of the study and the kinds of questions to be asked were described to the participants before the interviews began.

3.5.3 Data analysis

According to Saunders et al (2009) there are three main ways in which to analyze qualitative data, through summarization where large amounts of data are compressed into smaller and more manageable amounts. Secondly this can be done by categorizing where categories are developed from the data or theoretical framework and relationships can be recognized. The last option is structuring where narratives are used, usually from in-depth interviews.

The interpretation of the data used a fairly structured approach since both the observations and interviews had pre-specified particular aspects of interest to be investigated. It also relied slightly more on formalization than interpretation, it would have been very time consuming to interpret each of the 112 observations separately, this is why the observation checklist was used and later on compiled into a comprehensive and easily comprehended overview of the data. Of the three ways to analyze data this study used categorization to develop the data, the checklist for both the interviews and observations were structured in a way that made it easy to see relationships emerge when the data was compiled.

When the primary data from the observations and interviews had been collected it was compiled in an Excel sheet to give an overview of the occurrences. These figures served as the foundation for the empirical section of this study, the figures were compiled by day and department that they had occurred in
and this was done to get a better overview of the data. The data was also divided into the genders of the sellers and customers, this was done so that differences in behaviour in the different genders could be analyzed.

It could clearly be seen how many occurrences had taken place each day and in total for the whole week, this provided a good basis for the graphs, for calculating the percentages in the interactions and for describing the general trends in each section of the observations and interviews. In each section of the empirical findings concrete examples are made of the occurrences that were the most frequent, as well as behaviour or opinions that stood out from the majority or were found to be of particular interest.

3.6 Evaluation criterion

All research should be conducted in a way that ensures high quality and dependability, two measures that are usually used as quality measurements in quantitative studies are reliability and validity. Reliability can be said to be the consistency of a research. If a test is constructed and performed twice, the same test, under the same circumstances should give the same results if conducted under another period of time. While validity is the extent to which the study and the methods used have in fact examined the purpose of the study. (Malhotra & Birks, 2006).

However these measures are not transferable to qualitative studies. Bryman (2011) suggest a number of alternative criterions to evaluate and judge qualitative studies. A group of measures that are suggested for the evaluation is trustworthiness. This measure will be incorporated and applied to the study in order to generate a high level of reliability.

3.6.1 Trustworthiness

Within the group trustworthiness, the terms credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability are included. There can be many descriptions of a social occurrence, what determines if it is seen as credible is how acceptable it is to other people. Bryman (2011) states that in order to assure that the results reflect credibility the research should be carried out in accordance with the rules that exist, this can be done through triangulation. Triangulation means that more than one method or source of data is used.

The measure transferability is regarding how well the data can be transferred to another setting, Bryman (2011) encourages qualitative researchers to use thick or rich description of phenomenon. This way of accounting for data will provide other people with enough depth in the data to be able to judge if the results are transferable to another environment.

Bryman (2011) further argues that the term dependability will serve as an equivalent of the term reliability in quantitative research. Here the researcher shall incorporate an auditing stance to the research, in which complete and available statements are provided for all stages of the undergone research. Colleagues can then function as auditors to judge the quality of the procedures that have been used. However Bryman (2011) also states that this audit has not been a commonly used technique for improving the reliability in qualitative studies.

In social research it is not possible to achieve complete objectivity, the term conformability tries to assure that the researcher has acted in good faith. It should be obvious that the researcher has not let personal values affect the conducting of the study or the results, as stated by Bryman (2011).
3.6.2 Increasing trustworthiness and authenticity

In order to improve credibility a triangulation method was used, multiple observers, different sales people at IKEA were observed and the observations took place during all opening hours at IKEA. The authors have also been critical towards the sources that constitute the theoretical framework, this critical thinking aims to improve the level of credibility. To further increase the credibility semi-structured interviews took place to gain more data sources and finally the authors believe that the credibility was increased through a thorough description of the how primary data collection proceeded and what criterion was used to select the sample used.

Transferability has been achieved by giving rich and in-depth descriptions of the observed phenomenon in the empirical findings. The empirical findings use both facts and figures to give a better overall picture. The use of explicit examples of the most occurring episodes as well as episodes that were unexpected or unusual are given in order to create as rich a description as possible. This is why the authors believe the descriptions are deep enough so that the reader can judge if the findings are transferable to another setting.

Dependability has been achieved by letting a colleague view the collected information from both the observations and semi-structured interviews, in order for him or her to critically assess the quality. The authors feel that since an outside party has deemed the material dependable, that this criterion has been achieved.

Conformability or objectivity has been achieved by the authors having kept a neutral stance, by setting out be objective and not let personal values influence the research during the primary data collection as well as in the analysis of the findings. During especially the observations the observers discussed occurrences that could have influenced the objectivity, in order to come to an understanding of how to handle potential observer biases.

The observations were conducted as structural observations, where the researchers have specified in detail what will be observed (see observation checklist in appendix). This will result in reduced observer bias which leads to enhance the consistency of observed behaviours (Malhotra & Birks 2006). To further reduce bias in the observations the researchers were disguised when documenting the occurrences in the sales interactions. IKEA provided the researchers with official IKEA trainee clothing, this helped to integrate the observers as much as possible into the natural sales environment. The clothing will limit the impact otherwise produced and hopefully the behaviour from both the salesperson and the customer will be as normal as possible.

4 Empirical Findings

This chapter presents the empirical findings that were generated from the observations and interviews at IKEA Jönköping. The findings are presented through text and diagrams. It will also include examples of the most accruing sales interactions and sales interactions and interviews that stood out.

4.1 Observations

One week was spent at IKEA Jönköping performing observations of the sales interactions in the bedroom and living room departments. All seven days of the week were included and the observations were performed during different opening hours in four hour intervals. During this week 112 observations were made in the two specified departments, the bedroom and living room.
The bedroom department was being refurbished, which lead to a limited array of products being displayed. The actual space the department had, was limited which lead to it easily becoming crowded and had a different position in the store layout than usual. The space that the limited bedroom department had was at the beginning of the top floor, this led to many inquiries other than bedroom department related, such as general questions regarding how to find other departments or products.

The living room department had a sofa campaign that was in its last week during the observations, customers who bought a sofa received a gift voucher for 500 SEK that they could spend on items other than the sofa. This campaign led to the living room department being busier than usual, according to the sales staff at IKEA. IKEA also exposed a variety of warranties surrounding the concerning products, such as a 10 year warranty for the EKTORP sofa and a warranty that allowed the customers to try out their beds at home.

During the first day 14 observations were made in the bedroom and living room departments in total, these observations took place from 10 until 14 o’clock. One thing that could be noted was that the majority of inquiries came from elderly couples or young families. Also the bedroom department was slightly busier than the living room department. This customer grouping wanted a fair amount of help in trying out the beds and getting style advice both on the beds and sofas.

On the second day 18 observations were made and took place from 16-20 o’clock, the customers were more stressed than the previous day and many were customers who looked like they came directly from work. These customers already had good product knowledge and did not need as much assistance as the elderly couples needed the previous day.

The third day proved to be very busy and resulted in 24 observations that were gathered between 14 and 18 o’clock. One aspect that was especially noteworthy in the bedroom department this day was the use of several sales arguments (1-3 arguments) in the sales interactions. Some of the main arguments were the comfort level of the beds, the beneficial pricing and the high quality of IKEA beds. The sellers who used 1-3 arguments also suggested the customers try out the different beds by lying down for a while in their usual sleeping position to see which bed would be most comfortable and most appropriate for their weight and body structure.

Day four was spent at IKEA from 12 until 16 o’clock and in total 14 observations was made. The customers this Friday was a mixture of all kinds of segments from young families to pensioners and career people. One thing that stood out was that the majority of the interactions were conducted by male seller this day. Also add-on sales did not occur greatly with less than 50 % of the interactions including any type of add-on sales attempt.

On Saturday when the observations were performed it was overwhelmingly busy especially in the bedroom department. The observations took place from 10 until 14 o’clock and a total of 20 observations were generated. However more observations could have been made but the observers were constantly interrupted by customers asking questions and disrupting ongoing observations. The majority of customers this day were families that required lengthy assistance from the sales personnel which resulted in queues at the information counters, this in turn led to annoyance in the customers and bad tempers. One thing in particular was of importance this day, this was the best day out of the week for add-on selling, this was very apparent in the bedroom department. Out of the 14 observations that took place this day in the bedroom department, add-on sales were apparent in 8 of the interactions.

The last day of the weekend – Sunday, was also the last day of the sofa campaign and there were a total of 14 observations which took place between 14 and 18 o’clock. Mainly families came during these opening hours, which meant that every interaction took slightly longer than average because of the
many opinions in the families. Many of the customers said that a major reason for buying the sofa on that particular day was because it was the last day of the campaign. A majority of the customers who were interested in the sofa campaign bought foldout-sofas, this may be because these sofas were not as expensive as the ordinary sofas. In more than half of the interactions add-on sales occurred in the living room department, mainly home delivery and extra storage boxes for the foldout sofas were suggested to the customers. Of the arguments used to try and sell the sofas the 500 SEK voucher was the most occurring and probably the most effective this day.

The last day for the observations was a Monday morning between the hours 10 to 14 o’clock, which as predicted was not one of the busier days and times in the living and bedroom departments, a total of 8 observations were made. The customers this day were similar to the first day observations took place, since it was within the same time interval, mothers with children and older couples constituted the majority.

4.1.1 The role of genders
4.1.1.1 Customers

During the week of observation the authors observed 112 sales interactions. There were 63 observations where the interaction was between a male customer and the sales personnel and 49 observations between a female customer and a sales person. When looking at the empirical data it can be seen that on Monday in the living room section there were no male customers, but on both Friday (living room) and Monday (bedroom) no female customers were observed. It was also noticed that when a family or group of people approached a sales person, one female in the group often took command and was the “main” person in the sales interaction, even if the husband first approached the salesperson.

![Figure 7. Diagram showing gender distribution of observed customers](image)

Mrs. Normal female customer tended to have more questions during the sales interactions, as well as using a “thinking pause” and through this lingered around the sales personnel while making their decisions, more than Mr. Normal male customer. The women were also more positive towards small talk and humor. Mrs. Normal female customer also more frequently asked for the opinion of the sales person, especially if the sales person was a woman in the living room department. Here, the customer more often asked questions about colors, patterns and design of the sofa.

Mr. Normal male customer seemed more interested in the price and had storage questions. One other thing observed was that Mr. Normal male customer, more often than Mrs. Normal female customer had used the catalogue distributed by IKEA in order to find the right patterns, style and color. When Mr. Normal male customer approached the salesperson they pointed out the sofa they wanted and ordered it, without much small talk. The effect of this was that the sales interaction was noticeably shortened.
4.1.1.2 Sales Personnel

During the observations the authors observed 66 male sellers and 46 female sellers. This means that there were 20 more male sellers than female sellers, which gives the number of 16% more male sellers, and when looking at the results it can be seen why this difference exists. The difference was created due to the variation in workforce. There were no female sellers working in the living room department on Tuesday and Saturday and in the bedroom department on Sunday and Monday. There was “only” a lack of male sellers in the living room department on Sunday and Monday, which means that female sellers were absent one more day than the male sellers.

There was a difference between how the sales personnel treated their customers depending on their gender. The female sellers approached to customer more often and generally used more emotional arguments even though the male sales personnel had more interaction using emotional arguments. The male personnel more often waited for the customer to take contact with them and when they did, the sales person acted more like an information provider than a salesperson. They had very good product knowledge, but were poor in giving arguments and examples.

4.1.2 Buying signals

One area that is of importance to any kind of seller is the ability to read the customers and to be able to tell when customers are exhibiting buying signals. In the observations 94 out of the 112 observations the personal sellers could see and also act upon these buying signals. However these figures could be misleading since many of the customers approached the sellers and not the other way around. Once the sellers have noticed that a customer is projecting buying signals, the next vital step in the sales process is for the seller to fully understand the actual underlying need the customer has. The IKEA sales staff managed to do this in 89 of the 112 observations.

4.1.3 Product knowledge and associations

As stated above, the male sellers had a very good knowledge of the products, but were poor in giving arguments as to why the customers should buy the products and also in creating a sense of belonging.
through associations. There were more interactions including male sellers that presented associations to the customers. It can be seen from the results, that there were two days (Tuesday and Sunday) in the living room department where there was a high number of associations. During these two days, there were only two male sellers in the living room section. These two men stood out from the crowd due to them showing both products knowledge and also in giving the customer an association, but apart from these two male sales persons, the rest of the associations belonged to the female salesperson, which means that in general female sellers used more avocations.

Mr. Normal salesman helped the customer and showed superb product knowledge. Mr. Normal customer asked many questions and received clear answers, but there was a lack of any associations during the sales interaction.

During Friday, Mr. Different seller found it hard to both deliver expert product knowledge and associations. Mrs. Different customer, together with her husband and friend, approached the male seller at the information counter. They had been wandering around in the living room department for a long time, but the seller missed their buying signals and when they approached, they were irritated. Mrs. Different customer asked the seller to help her with a sofa and she asked what colors it was available in. The seller tried to connect with the customers by telling them that the sofa was in stock and explained why they should purchase it. The woman did not brighten up, instead she asked for more product information. When the seller then went back to the information counter to give her the information needed, she directly reacted because he did not know the information by heart. When he was out of sight, she complained to her friends about Mr. Different seller being unprofessional and not having enough of product knowledge and cursed at him. They ended up walking away, in a bad mood without buying a sofa.

The different sales interaction included a female sales person and a couple, where the male customer had the main part in the interaction. They were looking at a sofa and the sales person asked if they needed help. They were going to buy 8 sofa-beds for their hotel. When observing this interaction, it could be seen that the female sales person tried everything in order for them to purchase the sofas. She showed them all of the features and associated it to numerous things, while she gave them plenty of arguments why they should go through with the purchase. Instead of showing more buying signals, the couple showed less and less buying signals and it seemed that they stayed and watched the salesperson talk and demonstrate just because they felt obligated. The sales interaction lasted over 20 minutes, but still they did not buy the sofas.

Something that could be seen when the sales person used associations was that the customer tended to be more willing to purchase the product. From the observations it can be seen that almost 84% of the sales personnel showed good product knowledge, the rest of the 16% did not receive the chance to show their product knowledge or did not possess good product knowledge. As a whole, the sales personnel had exceptionally good product knowledge even though IKEA offers a vast variety of different products. This was something that increased the customers trust for the sales personnel an made it more likely that a purchase would occur.
4.1.4 Us or You and I arguments

Out of the 112 observations 28 salespersons used “Us arguments” and 84 used “You and I” arguments. There was approximately an equally use of the arguments in the bedroom section as in the living room section. There was also not a big difference between how the male and female sellers used the arguments. However there was a relationship between using “Us arguments” and giving arguments and associations. It seemed that the more involved the salesperson became in the interaction with the customer the more likely he or she was to use “Us” instead of “You and I”. And therefore it can be concluded that the women, who overall used associations more than the men, and also used more “Us arguments” then the men did. In the beginning of every sales interaction the sales person always started of the meeting by the use of “You and I” arguments, but as the meeting proceeded and the customers showed more interest the sales person started to use “You and I” arguments more often.

When customers were in the bedroom department the salesperson often helped with the purchase by finding out how the customer slept, by asking questions such as “do you prefer ...”. This resulted in “You and I” arguments being used more often in the bedroom section then “Us” arguments. The bedroom used 15 “Us” arguments throughout the observations and 51 “You and I” arguments. Even
though the “Us” arguments were not as apparent, they were more used in the bedroom section than the living room section.

In the living room section the “You and I” arguments were also more used then “Us” arguments. There were 33 observations including “You and I” arguments, and 13 including “Us” arguments.

There was not any remarkable difference in how the customers reacted towards the use of “Us” and “You and I” arguments, but as said above, “Us” arguments were often related to more arguments and associations being used.

4.1.5 Number of arguments

During the observations the authors observed how many arguments the salespersons were giving the customers to get them to buy the products. There could be 1 argument, 1-3 arguments, more than 3 arguments or none. In both the living room section and the bedroom section respectively 37% and 27% of the sales interactions the sellers did not provide the customer with any arguments. For the living room department no arguments reached the highest value of 37%, the second highest value was received from 1-3 arguments and had a value of 32, 6%. The lowest value was “more than 3 arguments” that had a value of 4, 6 %.

The bedroom department had its highest value on “1-3 arguments”, a value that reached 38%. The second highest value was 31, 8% which belonged to “1 argument”. Also in this section, the lowest value belonged to “more than 3 arguments” that had a value of 7, 6%. This numbers shows that the bedroom section generally gave more arguments to their customers compared to the living room and there was only a small number, three to be exact, observations where the salesperson gave the customer more than 3 arguments.

There was a relationship between arguments and how the customer reacted, the observers could conclude that a customer became more positive and willing to make a purchase when the salesperson presented an argument as to why the product would be a good fit. It was also observed that too many arguments would make the customers more insecure and negative towards the purchase. Another method used by the sales personnel was having few arguments, but repeating them to the customer.
4.1.6 Add-on sales

A total of 112 observations were made in the bedroom and the living room department. However, add-on sales were present in less than half of the interactions. Add-on sales throughout the interactions with the customers were present in 18, 8% of the observations, while add-on sales at the end of the observations were present in 24% of the interactions. If the customer required further products, add-on sales at the request of the customer was present in 3, 6% of the total observations. A total focus of the sellers in the current product was present in 6, 3% of the observations, this resulted in no add-on sales. And finally as mentioned above, the majority of sales interactions had no add-on sales present and this resulted in 45, 5% of the interactions having no add-on sales at all.

The most common add-on sales in the bedroom department were sheets, pillows, duvets and home delivery. While in the living room department add-on sales that were the most frequent were home delivery and storage for the foldout-sofas. Financing also occurred in the living room department.

One other thing that can be noted is that when the sellers tried to add-on sell either at the end or throughout the interaction they used either 1 argument or 1-3 arguments. These arguments included comfort, beneficial price’s compared to competitors and high quality. For sofas wash-ability (non-dry cleaning fabric) of the fabric was a reoccurring argument and the choices the customers had in terms of color schemes.

Mrs. Different seller gave a customer over 10 arguments during a 20 minutes sales interaction. These arguments did not persuade the customer to purchase the product, it rather made the customer seem more and more negative towards the product. The customer left the department without having made any purchases.

In the bedroom department, a family needed advice for purchasing a bed for their daughter. Mr. Normal seller approached the family, who was standing beside a low priced bed, the sellers first reaction was to tell them “The only good thing about this bed is the price”. The family explained that the bed was only going to be used until their daughter had grown older and could use a “grown-up bed”. Again, Mr. Normal seller argued that the bed was not a good bed to grow in and used another argument, that it would be cheaper to buy one good bed instead of one bad and one good. The sales interaction lasted several minutes and the sales person repeated his arguments frequently. The family seemed to develop a sense of trust for the salesperson, since he seemed so sure about the beds. They ended up buying a bed, almost 3 times as expensive as the low priced bed and walked away happy and positive.
Another thing that became apparent was that the sellers who created a good atmosphere between themselves and the customers were more likely to try to add-on sell either at the end or throughout the interaction. This good atmosphere was mostly created by smiling, joking and by treating the customers pleasantly overall.

| **Mr. Normal seller** did not focus on any add-on sale. **Mr. Normal seller** gave the customer the help they wanted for the purchase i.e. expertise, but there was no focus on add-on sales. | **Mr. Normal seller** did not try to add-on sell during the interaction. In the end, **Mr. Normal seller** asked if home delivery, pillows or other add-on sales were needed in the end of the conversation. |
| Mrs. Different seller in the living room section had a customer who purchased an EKTORP sofa. **Mrs. Different seller** recommended that the customer should purchase an extra cover for the sofa. She also recommended an EKTORP pillow, customized for the sofa. In the end of the sales meeting, **Mrs. Different seller** also suggested that the customer should have home delivery, since it, according to her, was the easiest way of transporting the sofa. | Mrs. Different seller in the bedroom department was very skillful in add-on selling, she argued that the customers needed mattress covers in order to extend the life span of the new beds. **Mrs. Different Seller** also proposed that the customers should get new sheets and pillows to go with the new bed. All these arguments were given in a friendly and likable way, the majority of the customers seemed to appreciate her advice. |

### 4.1.7 Customer attitude

When examining customer attitudes the observers mainly examined the body language of the customers especially at the beginning and at the end of the interaction. This was done to see if anything the salesperson did or said in fact could alter the initial customer attitude. The main object of interest was the customers’ body language – a closed body posture, little eye contact and overall negative verbal gestures were used to spot negative attitudes towards the IKEA sales personnel. While open postures and smiling were seen as positive attitudes towards the IKEA staff.

At the beginning of the interactions 63 customers were neutral (neither negative nor positive) and at the end of the interactions the number of neutral customer had dropped to 46. This is linked with the number of people that held a positive attitude, they started of initially being 42 customers but at the end of the interactions 59 customers had taken a positive stance. (Appendix figure A & B). From the total of 112 observations that took place 15 % of the customers changed their attitude in a positive direction and no customers changed their attitude from neutral/positive to a negative attitude.
So as was mentioned earlier the largest change in attitude has gone from neutral to positive, 17 customers changed their attitude from a neutral stance to a positive attitude as a result of the sales encounter with the personal sellers at IKEA.

4.1.8 IKEA sales process

During the week of observations the authors saw that IKEA sales personnel are not following the IKEA sales process as described by Malm (2011). There were a small number of the observations where the sales person approached the customer, instead the customers were forced to approach the seller in order to receive help. The second step was concerned with identifying the customers real need, here the majority of the sellers followed the process and found out the customers actual need. Most sales people possessed a high level of product knowledge, which enabled them to demonstrate and thoroughly show the features of the required products. Helena Malm (2011, personal communication) mentioned that the most important aspect of the process was the add-on sales, however the majority of the sales persons did not attempt to add-on sell, neither throughout the interaction nor at the end of it. The final step in the process was the closure, which in IKEAs case meant providing the customers with a print out of where the customers could find the products. Here the seller did a good job of providing the customers with the needed information.

4.2 Interviews

In order to see if the observations corresponded to how to customers perceived the situation and to what degree the rhetoric used had an impact on the purchase decision, the authors conducted interviews. The interviews were going to answer questions such as if the sellers used arguments, how the customers perceived the sellers in terms of service and knowledge etc.

The authors needed to “catch” the customers shortly after a purchase was made, since the memory of the sales interaction needed to be fresh in their minds and therefore the interviews were conducted after the checkout counters.
4.2.1 Gender

30 interviews were conducted and from these it can be seen that the customers had met 15 male sellers and 15 female sellers, a value of 50% each. The customers that were interviewed were 18 female customers and 12 male customers, a value of 60% female customers and 40% male customers.

One reason for this difference was that the female customers were more positive and willing to participating in the interviews and generally if the interviewers approached a couple the women often responded.

The authors could see a difference in how the two genders responded to the question if they connected with the seller during the interaction. There were 12 out of the 18, a value of 60% female customers that had experienced a special connection with the sellers, the highest value was received between a female customer and a female seller were 7 out of 8 felt a connection. Of the men interviewed, only 4 out of 12 experienced a connection with the seller.

![Diagram showing seller approach from interviews](image)

4.2.2 Finding and connecting to sellers

One of the first questions that were put to the customers who took part in the interviews was whether or not they had approached the personal sellers or if the seller approached them. Out of the 30 customers interviewed only 10% had been approached by a seller, while the other 90% had approached the sellers with their inquiries either at the information counters or the customers had looked up the sellers on the shop floor.

A question that was found to be of importance in connection with the previous one was if the customer had found it difficult to get in contact with a seller. The majority of the interviewees stated that it was easy to find and get in contact with the personal sellers. The customers whom found it difficult to get in contact with the sales personnel stated that it was difficult to find a seller and that there was no one present in the information counters or on the shop floor. A minority of the customers claimed that it was difficult to get in contact with the sellers due to overcrowding of customers and that they had to wait their turn in the queue at the information counters. One person said he had to go looking for staff since there was no one around in the department he was in.
In order to see how well the customers connected or bonded with the sales staff, the interviewees were asked if they felt got a sense of belonging or felt connected with the personal sellers. From the 30 respondents 53% stated that they connected and got on well with the seller, these interviewees said that the sellers used humor and created a joking and fun atmosphere, so that they felt comfortable. That the customers had previously met the seller was also mentioned as a reason for the nice atmosphere. One comment that was mentioned several times was that the sales person was nice and pleasant in general and that this created a good connection to the customer.

4.2.3 Customer satisfaction and product knowledge

In order to find out the general satisfaction of the customers during the sales interactions the respondents were asked if their latest interaction with the sales staff had changed their opinion of IKEA’s sales service. Here 93% of the interviewees had not changed their opinion of IKEA’s sales service, they stated that they were positive towards it and that it held a steady and consistent level of high quality service. While 7% of the respondents were not at all satisfied, they had to wait for service and were in general negative to everything.

One question that was of importance for IKEA was whether or not the customers felt the sellers had adequate product knowledge. Here 63% of the respondents felt that the sellers were very professional and had excellent product knowledgeable, while 27% did not feel the seller had adequate product knowledge.

4.2.4 Seller arguments

The customers were also asked whether or not the personal sellers had used arguments in their interaction, surprisingly according to the respondents in 93% of the interactions no arguments were used by the sellers. One unexpected answer in this question was one customer who stated that a seller had directly told the customer to not purchase a particular product because it was not of good quality. In the 7% of the sales interactions in which the sellers used arguments, one customer stated that the seller had claimed that she had the product herself and it was great and also made associations to the son of the customer and that the seller herself had a son the same age.

![Pie chart showing arguments used](image)

*Figure 15. Diagram from interviews showing arguments used*

4.2.5 Product need and add-on sales

One importance aspect of personal selling is the ability to clearly identify the customer’s need, i.e. if the customer wants a bed, how is it going to be used, every day at home or at a summer house. The majority of the respondents stated that the sellers did not identify and satisfy the product need. Only 36.7% of the interviewees felt that the sales personnel had made an effort to clearly identify and satisfy the customers’ actual need and not just satisfy the inquiry about the specific product that was being re-
quested. Furthermore a reoccurring statement from the customers was that the sellers just answered the
questions that were put forward by the customers but that the sellers made no effort to understand the
underlying need or what the product would be used for in which setting.

The respondents were also asked if the personal sellers had made any effort during the sales interaction
to add-on sell. However the question was put to the customers as follows “Did the seller recommend
any other products that would complement your purchase?” The results from this question were that
only 2 out of the 30 respondents stated that the sellers had tried to add-on sell, this constitutes 7% of
the total interactions. A minority of the customers also mentioned that the sellers had recommended
that they stop by the bargain corner on their way out, this however does not constitute add-on sales.

4.2.6 Customer critic and praise

The overall response to the question what the customers would like to improve or complement in the
personal sales service, was that the overwhelming majority of the respondents were satisfied with the
service as it is. The customers also stated that they found the sellers to be pleasant and nice in general.
One complaint that was reoccurring was that a minority of the interviewees found the layout of the
bedroom department to be messy and confusing due to the refurbishment and one other complaint
was that the sales person with whom the interaction had taken place lacked knowledge of the Swedish
language.

5 Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis from the empirical findings based on the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework presented above will be the basis for this analysis.

5.1 Trust Building

Rhetoric is a science that can be traced back to the ancient Greeks and has gone through intervals of
popularity and received a major downturn in the beginning of the 20th century. Today in 2011, rhetoric
is again a well discussed topic and science within marketing, news and entertainment. This thesis aimed
to investigate the relationship between rhetoric and personal selling, a relationship that was shown to
be distinct as a result of the empirical data collected.

Ethos is said to be one of the building blocks in rhetoric and concerns the speaker and his or her crediti-
tability. Rydstedt (1993) states that for a speaker to be credible the speaker must create a sense of be-
longing with the audience and also represent himself as knowledgeable and trustworthy. In the observa-
tions a question was included in the questionnaire that said” Are the seller using us or you and I argu-
ments?” This question was included in order to establish if the sales person created a “sense of belong-
ing” through “Us arguments” (Johannesson, 1998).

Out of the 112 observations it was only during 28 sales interactions that the salespersons used “Us a-
rguments”. A clear distinction can be seen between these 28 observation compared to the other 84. When the sales person used “Us arguments” a sense of belonging was created and these arguments
were mostly used when a good relationship was already established between the salesperson and the
customer. The sales person often used “us arguments” when using associations and metaphors, it also
seemed that the more dedicated to the sales meeting the seller was, the more “us arguments” were used.
When the sales person created a sense of belonging, it seemed like the customer trusted the seller more
and became more responsive towards the advice and arguments given by the salesman. According to
the interviews there were 16 out of 30 customers that felt a connection with the sales person through the friendly atmosphere that was created. This corresponds to the findings in the observations that one way of creating a connection is by creating a friendly atmosphere, which seemed to be the major reason why customers felt a connection towards the seller.

It has also been argued that a connection or bond with a customer can be created through the charisma of the seller, according to Hägg (2002). In order to create a real connection or good atmosphere between the sales person and the customer, the authors can conclude from the observations that the seller needs to show expertise through product knowledge, use “us arguments” and finally through the use of charisma in the interaction with the customer. After the observations were summarized, the authors would agree that Hauser’s (1986) statement is correct, saying that Ethos is not a thing or quality a person can fully possess but that it functions as an interaction between the personal seller and the customer. This implies that regardless how positive a sales person is if the customer is negative and not willing to turn his or her mood around, the creation of Ethos will not matter and the sales person will fail in trying to make the customer positive. This fact was seen in the observations since it was tremendously difficult to turn a customer from being negative towards a positive attitude and vice versa, complete changes in attitude did not occur once during the 112 observations that were made.

In order to create a sense of belonging the speaker should also be trustworthy (Rydstedt, 1993). McKean (2003), also states that it is fundamental for a customer to trust a company in order for them to make a purchase. Here, it can also be seen that both Rydstedt (1993) and McKean (2003) argue that in order to receive trust and belonging a salesperson must show product expertise and provide sufficient knowledge about the product. One question included in the observation was “Did the sales person show enough product knowledge?” Out of the 112 sales interactions observed 95 of them included a sales person showing satisfactory product knowledge which leads to customers feeling secure with the sales person. During a specific sales interaction the sales person lacked sufficient product knowledge which led to the customer showing great disappointment and irritated feelings. This showed the authors that product knowledge is an important factor when selling a product to a customer and therefore the authors agreed that both McKean (2003) and Rydstedt (1993) are correct in their statements.

According to Sirdeshmukh et al (2002) there was a relationship between the front line employee and the trust that a consumer had for a company. Evans et al (2009) also state that if a customer receives trust towards a company, they will be loyal towards the company for a longer time period. Many sales persons, showed good knowledge of the products, which created trustworthiness, but many also tried to recruit customers to the loyalty program, the IKEA Family club. They explained the benefits with the loyalty program and through this hoped to recruit the customers and make them loyal towards IKEA. This was appreciated by the customer, especially during the sofa campaign in the living room department and the customers agreed to join the club during every observation where they were offered to.

Another important factor when creating trust is humility, Werner (2004) argues that even though customers want to receive product information from experts, they also want to be able to relate to the salesperson and find mutual interest. During the observations it could be seen that when the sales person communicated to the customer in a more “personal” way and used arguments such as “You can sit in the sofa with your dog” the customer became more positive towards the purchase of the product. A few sales persons also tried to connect to the customer by telling them that they had the product of interest themselves or that they personally recommended it, which often made the customer trust the sales person's advices. One salesperson had low product knowledge but had a high level of humility by telling the customer that he or she had the exact sofa at home. The customer did not excuse his insufficient product knowledge even though the seller provided humility, this led to customer leaving without
purchasing a sofa. This shows that product knowledge in the sales staff at IKEA was more important to the customer than common taste or interest during this sales meeting.

The credibility of the sales person will have an effect on Ethos, but also the credibility of the whole company (Salomon et al, 2010). IKEA has a variety of warranties in most of the departments such as a 10 year warranty on sofas and a bed warrant that made it possible for the customers to try their beds out for a few weeks at home and if they were not content with their purchase they had the opportunity to return it. The warranties were visibly exposed throughout the department store surrounding the products that they concerned, the sales staff were also frequently informing the customers about the warranties. The different warranties made the customers more positive towards a purchase since they had the opportunity to return it or receive a 10 year warranty on their sofa. This made the customers more trusting towards the personal sellers when they recommended a sofa or bed and also they received a higher level of trust because IKEA believes their products to be of sufficient quality.

5.2 Creating Emotions

Pathos is one of the building blocks in the art of Rhetoric and according to Aristotle the main factor in Pathos is the feeling that is created by the speaker. Lindqvist (2008), states that the main point of Pathos is to understand the feelings and emotions of the audience and use these in the arguments of the speech. Lindqvist (2008) furthermore states that in order to appeal to an audience emotionally it is important to give much detail and show the bigger picture when speaking. The speaker will appear more trustworthy for the audience when he or she shows her own emotions and also the speakers emotions can rub off on the audience (Lindqvist, 2008).

Hart (1997) gives criticism to Aristotle and his beliefs that Pathos only concerns emotions, he claims that a separation between head and heart (emotions and function) cannot be made. During the observations made at IKEA the authors saw pure emotional arguments where only feelings and associations were used. There were also purely functional arguments and arguments including both emotional and functional aspects were seen during the observations. Therefore the authors do not agree with Hart (1997) and believe that there is a separation between emotional and functional (head and heart) arguments, which is consistent with Aristotle belief.

Prior to the observations, the authors had a strong predetermined belief that the female sellers would show more emotions and give more emotional arguments, but when compiling the observation emotional arguments had been used more by the male sellers at IKEA. The first thought of the authors was that this difference was a result from the fact that 16% more sales interactions were observed with a male seller. Although there was approximately 50% more emotional arguments made by the male seller and the difference in workforce did not play a major role, but this discrepancy was because all of the emotional arguments used by the male sellers were made by two male individuals. The female sellers use of emotional arguments was spread out over several of the female sellers. This resulted in a conclusion that female sellers generally gave more emotional arguments than men in general did.

There was also a belief that more personal sellers would use emotional arguments, but only 12, 5 % of the sales interactions included these types of arguments and it became clear that most sales personnel preferred other arguments in their selling techniques. This low number might also be a result from the customers not being responsive towards emotional arguments, which sometimes was seen by the observers. The sellers at IKEA may have sensed reluctance from the customers about the use of emotional arguments and therefore they chose other arguments over emotional arguments. Although many customers only received product information and functional help, there were also customers who had a more personal approach. In these cases the observers saw an opportunity to use emotional arguments,
in order to gain trust and a feeling of belonging, however the sellers missed or ignored these opportunities.

The customer’s attitudes were measured in order to see how many customers had a negative, positive or neutral attitude at the beginning and at the end of every sales meeting, this was done to see if the customer attitudes change throughout the interaction. It could be concluded that most customers could go from being neutral in the beginning of the sales interaction to being positive at the end. This was because many were happy about their purchase, but also that the seller’s mood rubbed off on the customers in a positive way. It was also seen that the sellers that were stressed and in a neutral or negative mood could decrease the mood of the customer. During the observations it could also be seen that sales persons that used humor, flirting and were friendly in general received a happier customer at the end of the sales interaction.

5.3 Argumentation

Logos is the third and last building block in rhetoric and concerns how a speaker uses argumentation in order to persuade the audience. Persson (2002) argues that this can be done by showing supportive proof. When conducting the observations at IKEA the salespersons in the living room department often argued that a sofa was of good quality and therefore a warranty of 10 years was included in the purchase, this was most certainly seen as a proof of good quality for the customer. Hauser (1986) on the other hand states that the term “proof” often can be misleading when it comes to Logos and argumentation, since many speakers use essays and public addresses as a proof, which is rather an opinion and not scientific proof. Therefore the warranty should not be an argument for the quality of the sofa, but rather an argument that the customers have the opportunity to return the sofa within 10 years if something goes wrong (regardless how the sales person uses the warranty, it is a good argument).

Arguments are also widely used in advertisements and within marketing in order to persuade the customer to make a purchase or buy add-on products according to Persson (2002), this method was used at IKEA Jönköping. The sales personnel tried to make add-on sales through arguments in order to convince the customers that the extra product or services was needed. When the sales person was add-on selling they could argue e.g. that home delivery of beds and sofas would eased the purchase, or that a mattress cover could give the bed a longer life span. The arguments often persuaded the customers and made them purchase the add-on products. It can be concluded that there were very few sales persons who actually tried to add-on sell. In the observation there were 51 sales interactions out of 112 where there was a total lack of add-on sales arguments. Also the interviews confirmed the fact that had been seen in the observations where only 2 out of 30 customers experienced an add-on sales attempt. These figures confirm that IKEA is using the rhetorical method of arguments when add-on sales occur, however there is room for vast improvements in this area concerning the number of customers approached for add-on sales.

There is a difference of opinion of how many arguments a speaker should use in order to receive the best results. Klerfelt (2010) argues that a speaker should use 3 main arguments and Persson (2002) states that too many arguments will have a negative effect on the receiver since it will diminish the effect of the most important arguments. While Hedlund and Johannesson (1993) claimed that arguments should be provided in order to step by step diminish other options. During the observation it could be seen that most sales person’s (40 of 112) used 1-3 argument and 5 of 112 used more than three. There was one particular observation that included more than three main arguments, where the customer probably purchased the product, but during the other 4 observations the customers did not seem to purchase the product. Especially during one observation, the sales person gave numerous arguments as to why the customer should go through with the purchase. Unfortunately, it could be seen that the cus-
Customer became more and more negative towards the product while the sales person argued further. Therefore the observations support the theories of both Klerfelt (2010) and Persson (2002), that 1-3 and no more, arguments are most efficient when trying to persuade a customer.

Even though the majority of the sales persons during the observation used 1-3 arguments, the interviews did not correspond to the same figures. During the observation, there was only 31% of the sales interaction that lacked any arguments, while the interviews showed that 93% of the customers interviewed experienced a sales interaction without any arguments. These figures can be a result of that the observations and the interviews did not take place in the same time interval or with the same sales personnel. The authors believe that the discrepancy can be a result from the arguments not being as apparent to the customers as for the observers. The observers paid more attention to the actual arguments than a regular customer most likely does and through this it can be concluded that the sales persons at IKEA need to focus more on using 1-3 arguments and making them more distinct in order to persuade their customers more easily.

There are three types of proof that can be used when giving arguments and these are expert opinion, statistics or history, these are called ordinary examples and there is also own experiences and examples outside the topic such as metaphors that can be used, according to Persson (2002). In the observations the most used arguments were expert opinion and statistics, an example of how statistics was used when arguing for a specific sofa was “this is the most purchased sofa” which would suggest it is of great quality and value. Persson (2002), states that when the speakers use their own experience in arguments it has greater impact on the value of the persuasion. The observations showed that when the sales person used his or hers own experience, it did not always work as expected.

Concerning expert opinion at IKEA the sales personnel showed great expert knowledge in the bedroom department, particularly two sale persons who had worked in department for a long time. They helped the customer try out the beds and thoroughly explained the positive and negative aspects of the beds and what bed types would benefit the customer’s specific body type. This always made the customer more positive to the bed recommended by the sales person, which shows that expert knowledge is a strong type of proof when giving arguments to a customer.

When creating arguments or when trying to persuade someone there are a couple of strategies that can be implemented. Perloff, (2010) mentions a number of tactics that can be used and the ones that were included in the observations were the direct techniques which entail assertion and loudly voicing one’s wishes and in-direct techniques that uses emotional targeting, such as putting the other person in a good mood. The hard tactics used verbal aggression and demanding while the soft tactics promoted kindness, flattery and flirting. In the observations no seller used the hard strategy, but the other three strategies were used equally. The authors did not expect any of the sellers to use the hard tactic since IKEA claims to represent simplicity and equality which does not correspond to verbal aggression.

![Figure 16. Graph of number of arguments used in the observations](image1.png)  ![Figure 17. Graph of number of arguments used in the interviews](image2.png)
sales personnel who were in a good mood generally used the soft strategy and tried to create a good atmosphere towards the customer, while the sales staff who were most product oriented used direct techniques. The authors believe that the hard strategy was absent because Swedish people in general are soft and undemanding in comparison towards other countries.

Perloff (2010) also states that it is vital in persuasion to create a common bond between the seller and the customer, this bond will lead to more attention from the receiver. This could be seen in the sales interactions at IKEA, a seller said she had the same sofa at home and also bonded over that fact and that they both were dog owners, this shows that Perloff has a good point in his statement that bonding with the customer will make persuasion easier. In another observation it was seen that when a sales person was unable to show expertise the seller was also unable to increase the customers purchase intentions by bonding.

5.4 Attitude

Communication between people does not only include what is being said but also the body language that is used. By having a positive environment communication becomes easier and people are more willing to listen to what is being communicated, Wrice (2002). When looking at non-verbal communication the facial expressions are the most important non-verbal communication channel, according to Argyle (1988). In the observations the customer’s facial expressions and body language were evaluated by the observers in order to see if their body language changed during the interaction with the sales person and if so what this was a result of.

One thing that was reoccurring when the customer’s attitude was changed from neutral to positive was that the sellers made jokes and were in general very friendly. This helped create a good atmosphere between the seller and buyer, and might be the reason that the customers attitude changed. Lindqvist (2008) argues that emotions tend to rub off on people involved in communication, this entails that having a positive and friendly attitude in the sales staff will result in more positive customers who are more open to sales arguments and persuasion attempts. This was seen in the observations when the sales staff was in a positive and happy mood the majority of the customers became more positive.

\[ \text{Figure 18. Figure of attitude change during the sales interactions} \]

As the model above shows there were no observations out of the 112 made, where a sales person managed to shift the negative attitude to positive and there was also no sales interaction where a positive customer became negative. Instead the sales persons were only able to make a negative or positive customer neutral or a neutral customer negative or positive. This shows that if a customer has strong attitude whether it is positive or negative it could not be fully reversed.

When the sellers had a negative attitude the communication became shorter and was more focused on the product features and they were less helpful in practically showing the required products. This af-
fected the customer attitudes negatively. One thing that was interesting was that in the majority of the interactions in which the customers had negative attitudes at the beginning they also had negative attitudes at the end, which suggests it is very difficult to try to transform an already negative attitude to become positive.

It was also clear that more people were positive at the start of the interactions than at the end of the interaction, this means that the personal sellers at IKEA failed in some cases to create a positive communication and take advantage of these customers already positive attitude. One reason for these occurrences was that some products were not in store and had to be ordered which can dampen a positive attitude. Another reason was that the sellers were stressed and not willing to take extra the time to establish the real need and show the products in detail.

During the weekend the majority of the customers was neutral in their attitude at the start of the interaction and remained so at the end, this can be explained by the hectic tempo created by the many customers waiting for help. When the customers received help, the sales person did not have the time needed to help every customer thoroughly and they were often interrupted in the sales interaction. Two of the weekdays had a high number of interactions and the majority of these interactions were neutral both at the beginning as well as at the end, these neutral customers could have been transformed into positive attitudes and thus creating an opportunity to generate more add-on sales.

5.5 The IKEA rhetorical process

The rhetorical process is a five step procedure that a speaker can use in order to prepare a speech, the process begins with mapping things, themes, stories, and feelings that play a role in the speech, in the real execution (Lindqvist, 2008). During the observations, it could be concluded that many sales persons used the same “themes” in their arguments and sales tactics for different customers, even though there was a big difference in execution. They also chose the wording and construction of their speech depending on which customer they were helping. The authors would therefore argue that even though the sales person does not follow the rhetorical process fully, they start the construction the same way as in the rhetorical process, in the “Invention” stage.

The steps that follow include writing the speech and preparing, these steps that are not consistent with how a personal seller works and will therefore not be further analyzed.

The last step of the rhetorical process is called “Actio” and is the real execution of the prepared speech (Lindqvist, 2008). The process the sales people used was that they “jumped” from the “Invention” stage directly to “Actio” where they performed the speech. During the “Actio” phase, Aristotle argued that it is not only the prepared speech that will have an effect on the outcome, but also the surroundings and other factors not created by the speaker. In order to see how the sales person handled the impact from the surroundings, it was observed if they were interrupted during a sales interaction and how they managed to resume the contact with the customer.

![Rhetorical Process Diagram](image.png)

*Figure 19. Figure showing observed rhetorical process used at IKEA*
There were 12 sales people that were interrupted during their interaction and of these, 2 sales persons had difficulties proceeding in their sales meeting with the customer. The explanation found by the observers for this was that both these sales interruptions occurred during the weekend when there was a hectic tempo with a lot of customers and queues. Therefore, when the salespersons were interrupted by another customer, they became interrupted again and again, which lead to them having a hard time getting back to the original customer. Other interruptions that the sales persons were exposed to were e.g. babies crying, questions from colleagues, but after these interactions the sales persons did not struggle to get back to their customers. The authors believe that when the sales persons were stressed and many customers were asking them questions at the same time, they lost their focus on their customers, but when they focused on one customer and were interrupted without being stressed, it was no obstacle for them to finish their sales interaction. It could also be seen that when the customers were interrupted in the sales interaction, it affected their mood and attitude negatively and if the external environment was calm and pleasant the customers were more positive which resulted in increased purchase intentions. This is line with the statement by Evans et al (2009) that external motivation to purchase a product is based on the environment such as ambience and service.

5.6 The IKEA sales process

Kotler et al (2008) describe the personal selling process as a seven step process where the steps are needed to been gone through by the sales person. The process includes seeing the prospective customer, approaching, presentation/demonstration, handling objections, closing the sale and to follow up the purchase. From the empirical data it can be seen that IKEA’s selling process is not entirely similar to the process described by Kotler et al.

When looking at the first step in the process, approaching the customers, IKEA are striving to improve their personal sales service by educating all sales personnel to approach all customers that show buying signals. It was observed that of the 112 conducted observations 94 included a sales person that reacted to the buying signals showed by a customer, which suggests that IKEA is successful in the matter. However, these numbers can be a bit misleading since these 94 observations where not only sales interactions where the personal seller approached the customer. Included in these were also observations when the customer approached the seller directly not giving the sales person any time to react on any buying signal. The other 18 observations occurred when the personal seller did not approach the customer even though the customers showed obvious buying signals.

The interviews conducted confirmed that the observations gave a misleading picture of the how many customers the sales person’s approaches. During the interviews only 3 out of 30 stated that the seller approached the customer and 27 answered that they had approached the seller. Also 7 of the 27 customer’s that approached a seller themselves stated that it was difficult to come in contact with a seller. This makes the authors believe that the observations have been given a distorted picture of how many personal sellers that actually approached the customers.

There was a relationship between the customers that showed buying signals, without being offered help, and the customers that had a neutral or negative mood in the beginning of the sales meeting. All customers that were offered help from the personal sellers were often more positive during the whole sales interaction, it seemed that the customers felt more “special” and “noticed” when they received help without asking. There were also a number of customers that were offered help from the sales persons but who turned down the offer.

Since there was a positive relationship between customer’s positive attitude and the sales person approaching them, the authors would argue that IKEA should attempt to more extensively follow the sales process given by IKEA, making sure all steps are followed.
Kotler et al (2008) also point out the importance of pre-approach where the sales person should acquire sufficient information about the customer. This stage can be necessary when establishing the customer’s real need, which IKEA finds very important. When looking at the numbers from the observations, there were 89 out of 112 sales interactions where the need of the customer was established, this could be done in several ways. In the bedroom section the most occurring way of establishing the need of the customer was to ask how the customer slept, even though the need was established this way, the authors would argue that this was not always enough. Other questions that could more precisely find the real need was “Are you going to sleep in this bed every night?” “How much are you willing to spend?”

Even though the authors believed that there is room for improvements concerning establishing the need, it is important to look at how the customers perceived the sales persons ability to establish a need. 20 out of the 30 interviewed customers believed that the salespersons found their real need, a value of 66% while the observers concluded that 79% found actual the need. The authors believe that this discrepancy is a result of the observers being very responsive to the salespersons trying to establish the need, while at the same time, the customers did not feel that that the sales person found their “real need”. This is also an implication that the sales personnel at IKEA should improve their ability to find and satisfy the customers “real” need.

As stated above there is room for improvement in the add-on sales stage of the IKEA selling process, due to the sales personnel currently not focusing on add-on sales. The last step which was closing the sale was conducted by the sellers to a satisfactory extent, since most sellers strived to provide as many customers as possible with the product print outs.

5.7 Adjusted model of rhetoric in personal selling

The model of rhetoric in personal selling has been adapted based on the empirical findings from the observations and interviews made at IKEA. The three cornerstone’s of rhetoric Ethos, Pathos and Logos are all still present in the model since they create the basis for all rhetorical methods, these three were also present during the sales interaction. Even though Pathos (emotional arguments) was not used very often, it had an impact on the sales interaction when used and is therefore also included.

In the new model the relationship between Ethos and credibility is still present, this is because it was seen in the empirical findings that a majority of the customers felt it was important to feel a connection towards the sales person. The majority of the customer found the sales person friendly and therefore liked the sales person, which can create a sense of credibility according to Fischer et al (1979).

In the first model, expertise was seen as a part of Logos since Logos is argumentation and in order to be able to argue for something the speaker needs to be knowledgeable in the concerned area. From the empirical findings there was a link seen between the sales person, his or hers expertise and the perceived credibility of the sales person. Therefore, expertise has been moved from below Logos to below credibility, due to it being a feature of credibility and Ethos in the adapted model. Most of the customers recognized the sales persons as knowledgeable in his or her area which resulted in the customers seeing the salesperson as more credible. Fischer et al (1979) also states that expertise will have an effect on the sales person’s credibility.

In the new model, arguments had been placed below Logos instead of expertise. This was done due to the impact arguments had on the sales interaction, seen from the observations, thus when using argumentation right it can increase the customers purchase intentions. The sales person does not only have to be an expert on the product being argued for, there are more important factors such as the number
of arguments, distinct arguments and emotional/functional arguments. Therefore, expertise was replaced by arguments as a whole below Logos.

Below Pathos, trust is still present. Even though emotional arguments (Pathos) were not often used, when they were used correctly, the customer bonded and connected with the sales persons. This was concluded by the observations and therefore the relationship between the two is not removed.

Even though the model has been gone through changes, the model still fulfills its purpose, to show the relationship between rhetoric and personal selling.

![Adjusted model of rhetoric in personal selling](image)

**Figure 20. Adjusted model of rhetoric in personal selling**

### 5.8 Practical implications for IKEA

- During the observations there were only 31% of the interactions that lacked any arguments. But the interviews showed that only 7% of the customer experienced argumentation from the sellers why they should purchase the product. The observations also showed that the use of 1-3 arguments was most effective. Therefore the authors would recommend that the sales person should argue more and distinctly in order for the customers to be more persuaded, with the use of 1-3 arguments during every sales meeting.

- During the observations it could be seen that when a customer was approached by the seller, the customer had a more positive attitude during the whole sales meeting. Unfortunately the majority of the sales persons at IKEA did not approach every customer showing buying signal, even though this had been pointed out by management as a key feature of the selling process. Due to this fact the authors would suggest that the sales person put more effort into approaching customer, especially the customers who showed clear buying signals.

- When add-on sales were used during the sales interaction it could be observed that the attempts were successful. However the majority of the sales interaction lacked any kind of add-on sales
attempt. In order for IKEA to increase sales the sales personnel should focus more on add-on selling by giving the customer arguments, emotional or functional, why the extra product is necessary or needed.

• If the sales personnel are stressed or generally in a bad mood they should try not to show this to the customers. It was very apparent during the observations that feelings rubbed off and that the sellers that used joking, flirting or humor often made the customer more positive towards the end of the interaction.

• The most crucial aspect of the rhetorical tools used in personal selling is the character (Ethos) and the product knowledge and expertise shown, this is a vital building stone in creating trust, credibility and to create a positive effect on the customers purchase intentions. Therefore the authors argue that IKEA should further educate their sales persons in all concerned departments, to elevate the level of product expertise.

6 Conclusions

In this chapter of the thesis the main findings are summarized in relation to the purpose of the study as well as the research questions. It will additionally provide the reader with some concluding remarks.

The purpose of this thesis was to “understand how rhetoric is used, and what effects the phenomenon has on the interaction between a customer and a sales person”. In order to answer this purpose three research questions were conducted;

• “How is rhetoric used in personal selling at IKEA Jönköping?”
• “How do IKEA Jönköping’s customers perceive IKEA in terms of personal selling?”
• “What effect does rhetoric have on the sales interaction between a sales person and a customer?”

The sales persons were not always aware that they used rhetorical methods when communicating to the customer, but the methods could be seen throughout the majority of the sales interactions. Rhetoric was used in order to persuade the customer through the use of arguments (Logos). Emotional and personal associations (Pathos) were also seen in the interactions, to a limited extent, in order to create trust. The sellers showed character (Ethos) through the use of charisma and humor which increased the level of seller credibility.

The interviews showed that IKEA’s customers had an overall positive attitude towards the personal service received. Most of the customers were not approached by the sales person and were not provided with sufficient arguments, according to the interviews. However, the sales persons managed to give a good impression through the use of expertise and humor which increased the purchase intentions of the customers, implying that these were two important aspects of rhetoric used.

If the arguments (Logos) were used correctly during the sales interaction a positive effect on the customer purchase intentions were created. When the sales person showed character (Ethos) and expertise it created a positive impact on the customer, due to a higher perceived credibility of the sales person.
Emotional and personal associations (Pathos) created a friendly atmosphere leading to the customer being more trusting towards the seller.

When the sales persons were unable to show expertise and a strong character, they were generally not successful in increasing the customer’s purchase intentions and attitude, even though emotional associations (Pathos) or strong arguments (Logos) were included in the interaction. This clearly indicates that the most crucial aspects of rhetoric in personal selling are the character (Ethos) and the expertise of the sales person, shown to the customer.

The most reasonable conclusion to be drawn is that when rhetorical methods, such as argumentation, showing character and providing associations, were used by the personal sellers it had an impact on the customers and their purchase intentions. Through the correct use of these rhetorical methods the sales person could achieve trust, credibility, loyalty and a positive customer attitude as well as an increase in the purchase intention.

7 Discussion
This final chapter includes suggestions for further research as well as some final words from the authors.

7.1 Further Research
Since there is a lack of previous studies within the field of rhetoric in personal selling there is room for further research to be made. This study was conducted at IKEA Jönköping, which is a company known for their mechanic sales services, such as self scanning cashier. One suggestion is to research if rhetoric has a different impact on personal selling regarding the geographical location of the store or for other business areas. Another suggestion is that more studies should be made in the field concerning other types of personal selling and also if it has a different impact on what kind of person that uses the rhetoric e.g. bank men.

Due to this study being conducted at IKEA Jönköping, there is also a suggestion to do studies in the same field but in other locations. The authors believe that by doing the same observations and interviews in one more location, such as Stockholm, the results would be different.

7.2 Final Words
Even though Rhetoric within personal selling is not a well researched subject it is highly relevant, companies most probably could increase their customer satisfaction through the use of rhetoric. Even though this study far from analyzes the phenomenon as a whole, it implies that more research should be conducted in order to understand the phenomenon. The authors would like to finish this thesis by saying “Handle them carefully, for words have more power than atom bombs” - Pearl Strachan
Bibliography


Malm, H. (2011) IKEA Jönköping marketing manager (Personal communication, 16th February 20011, 5th April 2011 and 11th April 2011)


## Appendix

### IKEA Observation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kön på säljare</th>
<th>Kön på kund</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kvinnna</td>
<td>Kvinnna</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Skapar säljaren en speciell atmosfär mellan honom/henne och kunden?
   - Ja
   - Nej
   - Om Ja, Hur? ____________________________________________________________________

2. Använder säljaren kunskap eller associationer för att vinna kundens förtroende?
   - Ja, säljaren visar på tillräcklig produkt kunskap
   - Nej, säljaren använder sig utav associationer

3. Skapar säljaren en känsla utav samhörighet?
   - Ja, säljaren använder sig utav ”vi” argument
   - Nej, säljaren använder sig utav ”jag” och ”du” argument

4. Använder sig säljaren utav argument för att övertyga kunden?
   - Ja, säljaren betonar ett från ende argument
   - Ja, säljaren använder sig utav ett, två eller tre argument och betonar alla lika mycket
   - Ja, säljaren använder sig utav mer än tre argument

5. Vilka övertygande argument används utav säljaren?
   - Direkta argument – säljaren uttalar högljut och bestämt sin vilja
   - Indirekta argument – säljaren använder emotionell taktik, får kunden att känna sig väl till mods
   - Hård strategi – säljaren är verbal och krävs/vande/fodrande
   - Mjuk strategi – säljaren använder smäcker och vänlighet
   - Inget

Ja, säljaren använder sig utav “vi” argument
Ja, säljaren använder sig utav ett, två eller tre argument och betonar alla lika mycket
Ja, säljaren använder sig utav mer än tre argument
Direkta argument – säljaren uttalar högljut och bestämt sin vilja
Indirekta argument – säljaren använder emotionell taktik, får kunden att känna sig väl till mods
Hård strategi – säljaren är verbal och krävs/fodrande
Mjuk strategi – säljaren använder smäcker och vänlighet
Inget
6. **Försöker säljaren mer-försälja?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ja, genom hela säljmötet</th>
<th>Ja, i slutet av säljmötet</th>
<th>Ja, kunden frågar om extra varor och säljaren ger information</th>
<th>Nej, säljaren är fokuserad på den vara han/hon säljer för tillfället</th>
<th>Nej</th>
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<td></td>
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7. **Vilken inställning kunden vid början av säljmötet?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negativa känslor visas, såsom armarna i kors, blicken ner i golvet etc.</th>
<th>Positiva känslor visas, såsom öppen hållning, leende, etc.</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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8. **Vilken inställning har kunden vid slutet av mötet?**

<table>
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<th>Negativa känslor visas, såsom armarna i kors, blicken ner i golvet etc.</th>
<th>Positiva känslor visas, såsom öppen hållning, leende, etc.</th>
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9. **Om kundens inställning ändrades under mötet, vad berodde det på?**

10. **Uppstod det några avbrott under säljmötet som berodde på omgivningen?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ja, efter avbrottet har säljaren svårt att återuppta interaktionen med kunden</th>
<th>Ja, efter avbrottet tar säljaren lätt upp interaktionen med kunden</th>
<th>Nej</th>
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IKEA intervjuer

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</tr>
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<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Hur upplevde du att du blev bemött av säljarna? __________________________

2. Tog du kontakt med säljarna vid informationsdisken eller blev du uppsökt på golvet?

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Golvet</th>
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3. Var det svårt för dig att få kontakt med en säljare?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ja</th>
<th>Nej</th>
<th>Om Ja, varför? ____________________________</th>
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</table>

4. Kände du en känsla av samhörighet mellan dig och säljaren?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ja</th>
<th>Nej</th>
<th>Hur__________________________________</th>
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5. Använde säljaren sig av övertygande argument?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ja</th>
<th>Nej</th>
<th>Argument________________________________</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>
6. Ändrades din uppfattning av IKEA och deras service under säljmötet?

   Ja   Nej   Om Ja, varför? ________________________________

   [ ]   [ ]

7. Anser du att säljarna visade på tillräcklig produktkunskap?

   Ja   Nej   Om Nej vad saknades? ________________________________

   [ ]   [ ]

8. Anser du att säljaren identifierade och tillgodosåg ditt behov?

   Ja   Nej   Om Nej, vad saknades? ________________________________

   [ ]   [ ]

9. Rekommenderade säljarna andra produkter som skulle passa till ditt köp?

   Ja   Nej   Om Ja, vad rekommenderades________________________

   [ ]   [ ]

10. Vad skulle du vilja förbättra och berömma angående IKEA:s säljservice?

____________________________________________________________________________
Figures from the observations

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**Figure A. Observed attitude at the start of the selling interactions at IKEA**

**Figure B. Observed attitude at the end of the selling interactions at IKEA**