การบริหารการขายแบบปรับเปลี่ยนพฤติกรรม เพื่อให้สอดคล้องต่อเป้าหมายของผู้ซื้อ

Managing Adaptive Selling Behaviors through Regulatory Fit Approach

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การขายแบบปรับเปลี่ยนพฤติกรรมให้สอดคล้องกับผู้ซื้อนั้น มีความสำคัญอย่างมากในการบริหารการขาย ที่ผ่านมามีการศึกษาถึงรูปแบบของการปรับเปลี่ยนพฤติกรรมการขาย ระหว่างการขายแบบมุ่งเน้นที่จะขายสินค้ากับการขายที่มุ่งเน้นที่จะตอบสนองความต้องการของลูกค้า โดยมีการวัดผ่านแบบสอบถาม (เช่น แบบสอบถาม SOCO และ ADAPTS) แต่ไม่มีการศึกษาว่าควรปรับเปลี่ยนพฤติกรรมการขายอย่างไรจึงเหมาะสมกับผู้ซื้อ งานวิจัยนี้จึงได้ศึกษาความแตกต่างของผู้ซื้อ โดยใช้ทฤษฎีการมุ่งเน้นข้อกำหนด (Regulatory Focus Theory) จากจิตวิทยา เพื่อนำมาใช้อธิบายกระบวนการในการตัดสินใจของผู้ซื้อระหว่างธุรกิจกับธุรกิจ (B2B) ในอุตสาหกรรมบริการ ผลการศึกษาแสดงให้เห็นว่า ความแตกต่างของการมุ่งเน้นข้อกำหนดของผู้ซื้อ มีผลต่อความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างรูปแบบการปรับเปลี่ยนพฤติกรรมการขายและผลลัพธ์จากความสอดคล้องของเป้าหมายของผู้ซื้อ และพบว่าการขายแบบสร้างแรงบันดาลใจให้กับผู้ซื้อ และการขายแบบให้ความร่วมมือกับผู้ซื้อ จะเหมาะกับผู้ซื้อที่มุ่งเน้นการได้ผลประโยชน์ (Promotion Focus) ในขณะที่การขายแบบเน้นภาพลักษณ์ผู้ขาย จะเหมาะกับผู้ซื้อที่มุ่งเน้นการป้องกันการเสียประโยชน์ (Prevention Focus)

คำสำคัญ: การขายแบบปรับเปลี่ยนพฤติกรรม, วิธีการขาย, ทฤษฎีการมุ่งเน้นข้อกำหนด, เป้าหมายของผู้ซื้อ,ผลลัพธ์จากความสอดคล้องของเป้าหมายของผู้ซื้อ

Abstract

The importance of adaptive selling is widely recognized in the sales literature. However, previous research has primarily focused on the degree to which salespeople change their behaviors between sales orientation versus customer orientation through developed scales (i.e., SOCO and ADAPTS), leaving the appropriateness of adaptations to

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rigorous academic questioning and study. Bringing individual differences to the fore, this study examines closely how regulatory focus theory (RFT), a theory of motivation and self-regulatory orientation that has been rapidly gaining prominence in the field of psychology, can be drawn from to explain a variety of buyer decision making phenomena. In this way the study extends the application of RFT to business-to-business (B2B) service industries. This work finds that the regulatory focus orientation of buyers plays an important role in moderating the relationships between selling behaviors and regulatory fit outcomes. To be more specific, this study suggests that inspirational appeal and collaboration are more effective when used with promotion-focused buyers, while personal appeal tactic tends to be more appropriate with prevention-focused buyers. The findings establish and illustrate a usable manuscript for tailoring sales influence tactics to different buyer regulatory orientations in a theoretically prescribed manner. By doing so, the study enables salespeople to positively influence the regulatory fit outcomes.

Keywords: Adaptive Selling Behaviors, Sales Influence Tactics, Regulatory Focus Theory, Regulatory Fit, and Regulatory Fit Outcomes

Introduction

Many organizations have discovered the value of a heightened focus on the customer and are moving to act as, or similar to, customer-centric organizations. However, customer-centricity is particularly important for boundary-spanning employees such as salespeople. When it comes to building relationships with customers, salespeople are critical front line players directly linked to revenue generation capabilities of almost all commercial enterprises.

While many salespeople consider their selling efforts a “numbers game” (the more you sell the higher sales you close) memorizing standardized scripts, approaches, and presentations to influence customers, potential customers are highly sophisticated individuals that are motivated by unseen goals and desires shaped by their unique personalities, life histories, and dynamic circumstances. Thus, although uniform selling can be effective, the difference between having a selling interaction and an *“influential”* selling interaction is in the art of effectively adapting selling behaviors to each individual and his/her values.

Adaptive Selling Behavior – "the Art of Selling"

A number of empirical studies over the past two decades investigate the relationship of adaptive selling behavior and various personal selling variables, including salesperson characteristics and abilities, situational variables, buyer personalities, styles of communicating, and multiple measures of sales performance (Plouffe, Christopher & Cote. 2008; McFarland, Challagalla, & Shervani. 2006; Verbeke, Belschak, & Bagozzi. 2004; Porter, Wiener, & Frankwick,. 2003; Bodkin & Stevenson. 1993; Bello. 1992; Spiro & Perreault 1979). Similarly, previous studies find that adapting sales behaviors to different buyers is important for superior sales performance; sellers that are more adaptive are more likely to be successful at closing sales (Predmore & Bonnice 1994).

Adaptive selling behavior (ASB) has been defined as altering sales related behaviors during interaction with or across interactions based upon perceived information about the nature of the selling situation [9], and is one of the determinants of superior sales performance (Plouffe, Christopher & Cote. 2008; Porter, Wiener, & Frankwick,. 2003; Bodkin & Stevenson. 1993). Therefore, although understanding the characteristics of effective salespeople has been a long-standing goal of sales practitioners and researchers, prior research has mainly focused on the degree to which salespeople change their tactics through developed scales (i.e. SOCO-Sales Orientation/Customer Orientation scale developed by Saxe & Weitz (1982) and the ADAPTS-adaptive selling scale developed by Spiro & Weitz (1990, but not on whether these adaptations are appropriate. This study examines, in particular, how to make adaptive selling behaviors consistent with buyer regulatory focus orientation. The results of this study will be a manuscript on how salespeople can modify their selling behaviors for a given buyer's regulatory orientation. In this way, using buyer regulatory focus (promotion vs. prevention), salespeople can effectively adapt their behaviors to create a regulatory fit. Such a fit will lead to selling success and the improvement of selling effectiveness.

The Adaptation of Influence Tactics

In order to be effective, a salesperson must influence buyers to be attentive in the persuasion, engage in proposals, and make buying decisions. The success of an attempt

by one person (the “agent”) to influence another person (“the target”) depends to a great extent on the Influence tactics used by the agent. Influence tactics found in early research include rational persuasion, exchange, ingratiation, pressure, coalition, and upward appeals (Erez, Rim, & Keider. 1986; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson. 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin. 1990). Yukl and his colleagues subsequently identified several additional tactics, including inspirational appeals, consultation, personal appeals, legitimating, collaboration, and apprising (Yukl, Chavez, & Seifert. 2005; Yukl & Falbe. 1990); Yukl, Falbe, & Youn. 1993; Yukl & Tracey. 1992). Some types of influence tactics can clearly be used for more than one purpose, but a tactic may not be equally effective for different purposes (Yukl, Chavez, & Seifert. 2005).

Only a small number of studies have examined the relative effectiveness of different influence tactics (Yukl & Tracey. 1992; Yukl, Kim, & Falbe. 1996) and even less research has been carried out on the way salespeople use influence tactics to influence buyers in the business context (Plouffe, Christopher & Cote. 2008; McFarland, Challagalla, & Shervani. 2006). This study adopts labels of rational persuasion, consultation, inspirational appeals, personal appeals, collaboration, apprising, ingratiation, exchange, legitimating tactics, pressure, and coalition tactics (Yukl, Seifert, & Chavez. 2008). The definitions of the 11 proactive influence tactics are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 The Definition of Eleven Influence Tactics

1. Rational persuasion – The agent uses logical arguments and factual evidence to show that a request or proposal is feasible and relevant to important task objectives.
2. Consultation – The agent asks the target person to suggest improvements or helps plan a proposed activity/change for which the target person’s support is desired.
3. Inspirational appeals – The agent appeals to the target’s values and ideals or seeks to arouse the target person's emotions to gain commitment to a request or proposal.
4. Personal appeals – The agent asks the target to carry out a request, support a proposal out of friendship, or asks for a personal favor before saying what it is.
5. Collaboration – The agent offers to provide assistance or necessary resources if the target will carry out a request or approve a proposed change.
6. Apprising – The agent explains how carrying out a request or supporting a proposal will

benefit the target personally or help to advance the target's career.
7. Ingratiation – The agent uses praise and flattery before or during an attempt to influence the target person to carry out a request or support a proposal.
8. Exchange – The agent offers something the target person wants, or offers to reciprocate at a later time if the target will do what the agent requests.
9. Legitimating tactics – The agent seeks to establish the legitimacy of a request or to verify that he/she has the authority to make it.
10. Pressure – The agent uses demands, threats, frequent checking, or persistent reminders to influence the target to do something.
11. Coalition tactics – The agent enlists the aid of others, or uses the support of others as a way to influence the target to do something.

Source: Yukl, Seifert, & Chavez (2008)

Previous research (McFarland, Challagalla, & Shervani. 2006) examined sales influence tactics that "work" with the buyers of each of these three orientations (i.e., task-oriented, self-oriented, and interaction-oriented); however, the findings revealed that buyers are highly complex. This complexity warrants further investigation on buyer orientation levels as they are essential in understanding the effectiveness of adaptive selling behaviors. This opens up an interesting and exciting avenue for probing more deeply into the individual characteristics of buyers and the influence of sales behaviors on buying decisions, as currently there is no known method for determining which types of influence tactics are more effective for a given buyer. In other words, if selling behavior adaptation is needed for superior sales performance, how can salespeople determine when or if a particular influence tactic is most/more appropriate based on the given buyer's characteristics?

Buyer-Seller Interaction – "Companies Don't Buy, People Do"

Salespeople interact with customers for the purpose of understanding customers' needs, designing and offering a product or service to meet those needs. Seller awareness of, and attention to, the human factors in purchasing will produce higher percentages of completed sales, resulting in fewer unpleasant surprises in the selling process (Bonoma. 2006). Salespeople should realize that *"companies don't buy, people do,"* and that it is

important for them to attune to the minds of buyers (Dawes, Lee, & Dowling. 1998). The ability to engage in interpersonal "mentalizing," and to read the mind of the customer, can be linked to the adaptive selling concept. The adaptive selling concept is a deliberative phenomenon, enabling salespeople to tailor their messages to fit individuals' needs and preferences (Spiro & Weitz. 1990; Franke & Park. 2006; Szymanski. 1988). Thus, adaptive selling is analogous to "working smarter," which involves planning to better determine the suitability of sales behaviors and activities that will be undertaken in upcoming selling encounters (Sujan, Weitz, & Kumar. 1994).

Individual differences in personality traits are another force which reflects the degree to which individuals regulate their self-presentation by altering their actions in accordance with situational cues present in an interaction (Spiro & Weitz. 1990). Mind reading, or "mentalizing," involves the ability to understand the actual motivational state of the interaction partner. Drawing on the above, this study employs RFT in order to better understand and identify buyer characteristics (e.g., personalities, beliefs, and motivational states) through their goal orientation. Specifically, this study proposes the idea that regulatory focus can be a useful technique for identifying buyer differences.

Regulatory Focus Theory (RFT)

RFT is based on the three conceptualizations of the self, as defined by self-discrepancy theory (Higgins. 1987; 1988; 1999). Self-discrepancy theory identifies the "actual-self" (self-concept), the "ideal-self" (representations of an individual's beliefs about his or her own self, or a significant other's hopes, wishes, or aspirations for the individual), and the "ought-self" (representations of an individual's beliefs about his or her own self, or a significant other's beliefs about the individual's duties, responsibilities, or obligations). Building upon self-discrepancy theory, Higgins (1997) has suggested that the behaviors and goals associated with a focus on the actual/ ideal discrepancy are different from the behaviors and goals associated with a focus on the actual/ought discrepancy. Regarding RFT, Higgins (1997) defines a promotion focus in which the individual acts to reduce the discrepancy between actual and ideal selves. In addition, Higgins defines a prevention focus, where the reduction of the discrepancy between the actual and ought self is the goal. Prevention focus is consistent with an avoidance orientation away from undesired outcomes,

resulting in increased motivation if failure is imminent, while promotion focus is consistent with an orientation towards desired outcomes, resulting in increased motivation if success is achievable (Higgins. 1997).

Whether individuals strive to fulfill their duties or aspirations (designated as regulatory focus) depends on both their disposition as well as the immediate context. For instance, some authority figures, such as parents or teachers, tend to apply punitive actions rather than withdrawal rewards in order to moderate the behavior of children. These children will then evolve to become motivated to satisfy their ought-self guide, called a Prevention focus (Higgins. 1997; 1998). When authority figures withdraw rewards instead, children will become driven to realize their ideal-self guide, referred to as a promotion focus (Higgins. 1997; 1998). Individuals can adopt two distinct strategies or orientations when they pursue goals (Higgins. 1997; 1998; 1999). They can pursue aspirations in the future, striving to maximize gains: promotion focus. Alternatively, they can strive to fulfill their immediate duties and obligations, attempting to minimize shortfalls: prevention focus. These two orientations significantly affect the behavior, emotions, cognitions, and preferences of individuals.

This study utilizes RFT to help understand how buyers can be influenced by various types of adaptive selling behaviors. Specifically, this research attempts to identify the adaptive selling behaviors that will resonate with buyers on the basis of their regulatory focus orientation.

1. Characteristics of Promotion vs. Prevention focus

Promotion focus: Individuals with a promotion focus attend to goals related to ideals and growth or advancement (Higgins. 1997; 1998). As such, they tend to notice and recall information and emotions related to the benefits of success and positive outcomes, directing their actions toward promoting these desired outcomes (Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes. 1994; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman. 1997; Higgins, & Tykocinski. 1992). Promotion-focused individuals direct energy toward pursuing opportunities to grow, gain, or achieve aspirations, while directing energy away from maintaining the status quo. According to Fröster and Higgins (2005) the eagerness of a person in a promotion focus leads to a more risky goal achieving strategy and to increased creativity. In this sense, promotion-focused

persons can be considered as “satisficers,” people that do not go through the entire process of answering a question (Krosnick. 1991).

Prevention focus: Individuals with a prevention focus tend to notice and recall information related to the costs of loss, failure, or punishment (Higgins & Tykocinski. 1992). Prevention-focused individuals are likely to value safety and to follow rules (Kark & Van Dijk. 2007). They approach tasks with vigilance and concern themselves with accuracy (Fröster, Higgins, & Bianco. 2003). Hence, individuals with prevention focus act in a manner that avoids negative outcomes and complies with explicit expectations or policies (Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes. 1994). Moreover, prevention-focused people possess a risk-averse behavior which leads them to the careful securitization of information.

Using a perspective that brings individual differences to the fore, this study argues that individuals with a focus on prevention (e.g., preventing errors or punishment) behave differently from those with a focus on promotion (e.g., achieving growth or rewards) in the pursuit of a buying decision. By applying RFT in an organizational buyer setting, this study addresses B2B buyer perceptions on different selling behaviors of salespersons in the purchasing task.

2. The Concept of Regulatory Fit

Regulatory focus shapes the preferences of individuals. When individuals adopt a promotion focus they prefer creative and exploratory activities in which they can achieve some form of gain, but shun tasks in which they need to identify and address shortfalls. When individuals adopt a prevention focus, however, they prefer to redress shortfalls rather than facilitate gains (Freitas & Higgins. 2002). These observations can be ascribed to the principal of regulatory fit Higgins, E. T. (2000). Higgins, E. T. (2005). Higgins, E. T. (2006).

Regulatory fit occurs when individuals derive value from using strategic means, during goal pursuit, that align with their underlying regulatory orientations Avnet, Tamar & E. Tory Higgins (2006). Specifically, when customers engage in activities that are consistent with their regulatory orientation, they experience heightened motivation and an “it just feels right” sensation (Aaker & Lee. 2006). Previous research has shown that individual regulatory focus is an important determinant of customer behavior (Higgins. 2006). Regulatory fit occurs when the context or situation uses an approach preferred by the

individual's regulatory orientation; the individual feels "right," and this compatibility should have positive motivational consequences (Idson, Liberman, & Higgins. 2004). When the situation and the individual regulatory orientation are in a state of misfit, the incompatibility should have negative motivational consequences as the individual feels "wrong" (Camacho, Higgins, & Luger,. 2003). A fit between one's regulatory focus and the manner in which the choice was made would increase the perceived value of the product (Avnet & Higgins. 2006). Specifically, promotion- (prevention) focused people value a chosen product more when they are asked to use their feelings (reasons) to make a choice.

In summary, regulatory focus plays an important role in processes involving persuasion, self-regulation, categorization, judgment, and choice (Zhao & Pechmann. 2007; Lee & Aaker. 2004). Recent studies on the application of RFT emphasize the importance of regulatory fit in relation to customer outcomes. Prior research documents the consequences of the fit between these two factors. When the manner of goal pursuits fits customer regulatory focuses, they (1) place a higher value on their chosen objects, (2) are more motivated and enjoy more goal pursuits, and (3) feel right about their goal pursuits Avnet, (Tamar & Higgins.2006; Hong & Lee. 2008; Wang & Angela. 2006; Zhou & Pham. 2004).

Hypotheses

When salespersons exhibit "inspirational appeals," they arouse buyer ideals and emotions in order to encourage commitment to sales interactions and purchasing decisions. Buyers with a promotion focus, therefore, should be motivated by inspirational appeal behaviors. Promotion-focused individuals pursue gain and aspirations, which include love and approval. These personal appeal behaviors should induce a promotion-focused buyer to pursue unconscious desires of social approval and affection, requiring that salespersons employ personal appeals that demonstrate a close relationship with buyers by asking them to make purchasing decisions out of friendship, or by asking for a personal favor from the buyers during the sales interaction. Promotion-focused individuals are sensitive to the presence or absence of positive outcomes and attempt to minimize errors of omission (Higgins, Shah, & Friedman. 1997). Buyers with promotion focus should be triggered by sales collaboration tactics as well as by apprising tactics. From collaboration tactics, buyers expect to gain a salesperson's assistance or necessary resources which will benefit a

buyer's career advancement when making a buying decision. Buyers thus anticipate the opportunity for advancement has not been missed and/or rapid progress is being made toward their goal, resulting from apprising tactics.

When salespersons use praise and flattery (ingratiation tactics) before or during sales interactions, they should be more attractive to promotion-focused buyers as the ingratiation tactic will increase buyer perceptions of success, achievement, and social status. In the context of an exchange tactic, a salesperson offers something that the buyer wants at a later time. Promotion-focused individuals are sensitive to positive outcomes or gain; therefore, the offer of something in exchange should activate the promotion orientation of buyers. In summary, this study proposes the idea that promotion-focused buyers prefer influence tactics that persuade the buyer of positive gain, achievement, inspiration, and cooperation, which are inspirational appeals, personal appeals, collaboration, apprising, ingratiation, and exchange tactics.

Hypothesis 1: The higher a buyer promotion focus, the stronger the positive effect of a salesperson's (a) inspirational appeals, (b) personal appeals, (c) collaboration, (d) apprising, (e) ingratiation, and (f) exchange on regulatory fit outcomes (e.g., feel-right, arousal, and perceived value).

According to RFT, individuals with a prevention focus tend to notice and recall information related to the costs of loss, failure, or punishment (Higgins & Tykocinski. 1992). Hence, when a salesperson uses logical arguments and factual evidence to show that a purchasing decision is feasible and relevant for important task objectives, buyers should be moved by the salesperson's relational persuasive messages. Prevention-focused buyers tend to take all available information into consideration when making a decision in order to maximize the accuracy of the decision's outcome. When a salesperson utilizes a consultation tactic by asking buyers to suggest improvements, changing details in a sales offer accordingly should minimize possible loss or failure in the buying decision of which the prevention-focused buyers are concerned with.

Since prevention-focused buyers are likely to follow rules and regulations, a proposal presented by the salesperson as consistent with official rules and policies or with a prior contract, employs legitimating tactics that should comply with the risk-averse behavior of the prevention focused buyer. When a salesperson uses pressure by demanding,

threatening, frequent checking, or persistent reminding to influence buyers, prevention-focused buyers should avoid negative outcomes by agreeing with this salesperson. The strength of an individual's prevention focus predicts their tendency to avoid "outgroup" members (Shah, Brazy, & Higgins. 2004). When a salesperson asks someone to help influence buyers to make a purchase decision, these coalition tactics should activate the prevention-focused buyer's sense of punishment or disapproval avoidance from disagreement with others. In conclusion, this study proposes the idea that prevention-focused buyers prefer Influence tactics that avoid negative outcomes (e.g., loss or punishment) and that comply with safety and rules.

Hypothesis 2: The higher a buyer prevention focus, the stronger the positive effect of a salesperson's (a) consultation, (b) rational persuasion, (c) legitimating tactics, (d) pressure, and (e) coalition tactics on regulatory fit outcomes (e.g., feel-right, arousal, and perceived value).

Methodology

This study used systematic stages for research design, including: pretesting to identify any ambiguous questions and terms or unclear direction, pilot testing to determine the validity and reliability of the instruments used in this study, and the main study to test the hypotheses in the context of the buyer-seller interaction. The importance of this research has to do with understanding the actions taken by purchasing agents and salespersons in the context of buyer perceptions regarding adaptive selling behaviors and buyer outcomes. First, the respondents were asked to self-rate their Regulatory Focus orientation. They were then asked to think about their previous purchasing experience and salesperson behaviors when there was a purchase and when there was no purchase. The respondents were also asked to focus only on the sales interaction phase of the purchasing process in order to minimize the contaminating effects of other variations. For each scenario, respondents were asked to rate how often the salesperson employed various sales Influence tactics. In the third step, the respondents were asked to rate how they felt about the salesperson and/or sales interaction based on the buyer's experience of regulatory fit when the salesperson employed selling behaviors, in the context of a purchase or non-purchase.

This study modified two pre-designed instruments which are 18-item General Regulatory Focus Measure (GRFM) (Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda. 2002). for regulatory focus orientation and 33-item Influence Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ) (Yukl, Seifert, & Chavez. 2008). for influence tactics based on previous study. The internal reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for the prevention and promotion focus are .809 and .839, respectively. The result of internal scale reliability for the 11 sales influence tactics is ranged from .643 (apprising) to .973 (personal appeal). This study, carefully taking into account the regulatory fit concept, designs the regulatory fit outcome scale items based on new and growing evidence and applies it to the context of the buyer-seller interaction. The new regulatory fit outcome scale is composed of 8 questions distributed to feel-right (α = .940), arousal (α = .893), and perceived value (α = .818) items. The data collection was done through a web-based survey. The participants are 205 purchasing agents employed by U.S. small- and medium-sized companies who regularly contacted salespeople from service-providing companies (e.g., logistic services (transportation, shipping), marketing services, meetings & accommodations).

Data Analysis and Result

This study utilized a hierarchical regression model approach. At level 1 analysis, a regression equation is estimated for each selling tactics to regulatory fit outcomes in the study. Further, interactions between each selling tactics and buyer regulatory orientation (promotion or prevention focus), according to the proposed hypotheses, are included in level 2 analysis. At level 3 analysis, the reverse interaction terms between each selling tactics and the other type of buyer regulatory orientation are included as alternative testing. For the purchase scenario, the results indicates that the main independent variables along with buyer regulatory orientation explain 33.4% of the variance in regulatory fit outcomes ($F_{16, 188}$ = 5.897, p<.001). The inclusion of the interaction terms in equation 2 resulted in a significant increase in the total variance in the perceived regulatory fit. In particular, the interaction term explained an extra 8.8% of the variance in the regulatory fit outcome variable ($\Delta F_{14, 174}$ = 1.885, p<.05) above and beyond the rest of the variables included in the equation. The inclusion of the reverse interaction terms in equation 3 shows no significant results. The regression results indicate that the interaction term between collaboration and

buyer promotion focus is found to be positive and significant (β = .22, p<.05). For the non-purchase scenario, results indicates that the main independent variables along with buyer regulatory orientation explain 46.7% of the variance in regulatory fit outcomes ($F_{16, 188}$ = 10.286, p<.001). The inclusion of the interaction terms in equation 2 resulted in a significant increase in the total variance in the regulatory fit outcomes. In particular, the interaction term explained an extra 7.1% of the variance in the regulatory fit outcomes variable ($\Delta F_{14, 174}$ = 1.894, p<.05) above and beyond the rest of the variables included in the equation. The inclusion of the reverse interaction terms in equation 3 shows no significant results. The regression results indicate that the interaction term between inspirational appeal and buyer promotion focus is found to be positive and significant (β = .21, p<.05) while the interaction term between apprising and buyer promotion focus is found to be negative and significant (β = -.28, p<.05).

Conclusions and Implications

This study develops a theoretically grounded framework, presenting advancement in understanding the suitability of selling behaviors to different types of buyers based on their regulatory orientation. This study confirms that using buyer regulatory orientation (promotion vs. prevention focus) salespeople can effectively adapt their behaviors to create perceived regulatory fit and regulatory fit outcomes, leading to selling success and improved selling effectiveness. The findings of this study provide an implementable method for guiding adaptive selling behaviors through identifying the types of sales influence tactics most effective for a given buyer based on a buyer regulatory orientation. Based solely on the analytic results of the study, it appears that when dealing with promotion-focused buyers, salespeople who employ inspirational appeal and collaboration would gain an increased amount of buyers experiencing regulatory fit outcomes while pressure tactics would lead to lower buyer experiences with regulatory fit outcomes in people with the same focus.

On the contrary to promotion-focused buyers, collaboration tactics should be avoided when approaching prevention-focused buyers; personal appeal tends to be more appropriate with the prevention-focused. In practice, salespeople can employ this new knowledge about influence tactics by asking a few indicative questions to identify the degree to which a buyer is oriented towards the promotion or prevention focuses. For

example, asking about a buyer concern with purchasing tasks and/or expected outcomes from the purchasing decisions can reveal the regulatory focus orientation of a buyer. Using the answer to the question, a salesperson could modify the arguments and information they give to that buyer regulatory focus. This means that salespeople can influence buyers as long as they use the selling behaviors recommended by this research for a given buyer based on a buyer regulatory orientation.

Although the buyer-seller dyadic is a prime sample for exploring the relationships between buyers and sellers during sales interactions, a limitation of this research design resides in the fact that the reported information is self-reported from buyers. Future research using buyer-seller dyads could make an important comparison between buyer regulatory orientation and seller regulatory orientation. Such a closer examination of both buyer and seller regulatory orientations might add to the current understanding of how the regulatory orientations of both buyers and sellers influence adaptive selling behaviors, regulatory fit, regulatory fit outcomes and purchasing decisions.

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