

## Motivating salesperson customer orientation: insights from the job characteristics model

Mrugank V. Thakor<sup>a,1</sup>, Ashwin W. Joshi<sup>b,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Commerce and Administration, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Boulevard West, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3G 1M8

<sup>b</sup>Schulich Business School, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M3J 1P3

Received 6 September 2002; accepted 14 October 2003

### Abstract

Relative to sales orientation, customer orientation requires greater expenditure of effort by the salesperson in customer-related interactions. Consequently, salespeople have to be motivated to engage in this mode of selling. In this research, we draw from the job characteristics model (JCM) to argue that (i) salesperson motivation to engage in customer orientation will be impacted by the extent to which they experience their work as meaningful and that (ii) this impact will be moderated by their affective evaluations of two aspects of their work context: their identification with the values of their organization and their satisfaction with the pay they receive. Research results from a survey of 281 salespeople show that experienced meaningfulness has a positive main effect on customer orientation and that both organizational identification and pay satisfaction enhance this positive main effect. Theoretical, managerial, and future research implications arising from the research results are discussed.

© 2003 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

*Keywords:* Salespeople; Customer orientation; Job characteristics model

### 1. Introduction

It has been widely noted in prior literature that customer-oriented selling (or customer orientation) creates greater long-term performance benefits for the salesperson relative to sales-oriented selling (or sales orientation) (Brady and Cronin, 2001; Goff et al., 1997; Kelley, 1992; Langerak, 2001; Reicheld and Sasser, 1990; Saxe and Weitz, 1982). Despite these benefits, there exists considerable variance in the extent to which customer orientation is practiced (Boles et al., 2001; Brown et al., 2002). A key reason for salesperson persistence with sales orientation and reluctance to engage in customer orientation is that the latter requires greater salesperson effort in customer relationship development activities (Saxe and Weitz, 1982, p. 348). Since effort is determined by motivation (Deci and Ryan, 1985), salesperson motivation to engage in customer orientation is a

precondition for its practice. Accordingly, in order to explain the variance in the practice of customer orientation, it is necessary to identify the determinants of salesperson motivation to engage in this mode of selling.

While there exists a significant body of the prior literature on customer orientation, there remain important gaps in our understanding of the factors that motivate customer orientation. First, despite considerable evidence regarding the motivating propensity of jobs (Eby et al., 1999; Hackman and Oldham, 1980), the effect of the salesperson's affective evaluation of their job on customer orientation has not been examined in prior literature (for an exception, see O'Hara et al., 1991). Given that jobs exist within organizational contexts, the salesperson's affective evaluation of their job and of their organization have interrelated effects on salesperson motivation to engage in customer orientation. The second limitation in extant customer orientation research is that the interrelated effects of these two different motivational drivers on customer orientation have not been explored. Salespeople receive compensation in exchange for the exertion of effort in their jobs. Thus, it is important to understand the interrelated effects of the salesperson's affective evaluations of their job and of the pay that they receive on their motivation to engage in customer orienta-

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1-416-736-2100x77958; fax: +1-416-736-5762.

E-mail addresses: [mthakor@jmsb.concordia.ca](mailto:mthakor@jmsb.concordia.ca) (M.V. Thakor), [ajoshi@schulich.yorku.ca](mailto:ajoshi@schulich.yorku.ca) (A.W. Joshi).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +1-514-848-2424x2999; fax: +1-514-848-4554.

<sup>2</sup> The authors have contributed equally to the manuscript.

tion. The third limitation of extant customer orientation literature is that the interrelated effects of these different motivational drivers on customer orientation have not been explored.

In this research, we draw from the job characteristics model (JCM) (Hackman and Oldham, 1980) to address these limitations in prior customer orientation research. JCM is especially appropriate for the purposes of our research for two reasons: one, because it explicitly focuses on the motivating potential of jobs, and two, because it explicitly identifies the affective evaluations of the organization context and pay as moderators of the relationship between the salesperson's affective evaluation of their job and motivation, thereby establishing the structure of the interrelationships among these motivational drivers.

We begin by developing the theoretical background for our conceptual framework. Following this, we define customer orientation and develop the antecedent and moderators of this construct. Subsequently, we discuss the methods used to test this conceptual framework. The results of our empirical tests are then presented. We close with a discussion of research results in terms of their implications for future research, theory, and practice.

## 2. Conceptual framework

### 2.1. Theoretical background

JCM argues that the motivation to work is a function of three critical psychological states—experienced meaningfulness of the work (or experienced meaningfulness), experienced responsibility for outcomes of the work, and knowledge of the actual results of the work activities. These three critical psychological states, in turn, are determined by five job characteristics—skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Renn and Vandenberg, 1995).

Empirical testing of the full model has shown that experienced meaningfulness is the key mediator of all the five core job characteristics on motivation (see Johns et al., 1992), thereby making it an especially salient driver of motivation. Given that job-related effects have not been extensively examined in prior customer orientation research and given the salience of experienced meaningfulness in JCM, we focus upon the effect of this affective evaluation of the job on customer orientation. In the discussion below, the relationship between experienced meaningfulness and customer orientation is referred to as the focal main effect.

In addition to establishing that job-induced psychological states (or affective evaluations of the job) affect employee work behavior, JCM argues that this effect will be moderated by employee affective evaluations of the work context. We focus upon two aspects of the work context—organizational values and pay—and examine the moderating effects of salesperson affective evaluations of both aspects on the

focal main effect. The organizational identification construct represents the salesperson's affective evaluation with organizational values, and the pay satisfaction construct represents the salesperson's affective evaluation of their pay.

### 2.2. Customer orientation

An important part of the salesperson's function is to help customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer preferences (Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Spiro and Weitz, 1990). Two selling strategies are widely discussed in the literature—customer-oriented selling (or customer orientation) and sales-oriented selling (or sales orientation). These two orientations differ both in terms of their objectives and the means used to achieve objectives.

Customers have preferences both in the immediate and long term. Typically, short-term preferences (or wants) are felt and clearly articulated whereas long-term preferences (or needs) tend to be latent. A customer-oriented salesperson aims to uncover and satisfy these latent needs. Indeed, as Saxe and Weitz (1982, p. 344) state, “highly customer-oriented salespeople avoid actions which sacrifice customer interest to increase the probability of making an immediate sale.” The objective of sales orientation, by contrast, is to satisfy articulated customer preferences. As the items in the widely used SOCO scale make clear (Saxe and Weitz, 1982), the two selling orientations also differ with respect to means. Whereas customer orientation places an emphasis on listening to customers (e.g., I try to find out what kind of product would be most helpful to a customer) and dialogue (e.g., I try to get customer to discuss their needs with me), sales orientation encourages opportunistic (John, 1984) means (e.g., I paint too rosy a picture of my products to make them sound as good as possible), if these are necessary to make the sale. In this research, we focus on customer orientation, key characteristics of which are as follows: a focus on uncovering and satisfying the customer's long-term needs by listening to and working with customers.

In order to be customer oriented, the salesperson has to be motivated to expend greater effort, relative to the sales orientation, in customer-related interactions (Saxe and Weitz, 1982). Motivation to expend effort is generated through rewards, with rewards either being intrinsic to activity performance or external to the activity and whose procurement is enabled by activity performance (Deci and Ryan, 1985). The feeling of accomplishment that arises from successful activity performance is regarded as an intrinsic motivator because it is a rewarding psychological state that is directly attained through successful activity performance (Brown et al., 1993; Hall, 1976). Compensation that is received in exchange for activity performance enables the individual to obtain outcomes of value and hence is regarded as an extrinsic motivator (Lawler, 1971, 1973). As we elaborate below, experienced meaningfulness and organizational identification foster the feeling of accomplishment, thereby motivating the salesperson to engage

in customer orientation through intrinsic means, and pay satisfaction fosters salesperson ability to procure valued outcomes, thereby fostering salesperson motivation to engage in customer orientation through extrinsic means.

### 2.3. The focal main effect: experienced meaningfulness on customer orientation

Salespeople will be motivated to expend the additional effort that is required by customer-oriented selling if they believe that they will experience a feeling of accomplishment from this activity. In order to develop this belief, salespeople have to perceive customer-oriented selling as being an important activity (Hall, 1976).

Experienced meaningfulness enhances the activity importance by making the work “count” in the salesperson’s “own system of values” (Hackman and Oldham, 1980, p. 73). Thus, by fostering the perception of activity importance, experienced meaningfulness generates salesperson belief that they will experience a feeling of accomplishment from having successfully engaged in customer-oriented selling. Consistent with this argument, prior research has found experienced meaningfulness to be positively related to intrinsic motivation (see meta-analysis by Eby et al., 1999). Accordingly, we predict,

**H1:** Experienced meaningfulness will be positively related to customer orientation.

### 2.4. Organizational identification: main and moderator effects

While experienced meaningfulness is a key determinant of activity importance, it is not the only determinant. Activities take place within organizational contexts and as such, the values of this context can shape employee perceptions of activity importance. However, the effect of organizational values on employee perceptions is contingent on the extent to which employees accept these values (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994). We define organizational identification as a state of psychological congruence between salesperson and organizational values (Mael and Ashforth, 1992, p. 104).

The commitment to fulfilling the long-term needs and wants of customers is now a commonly held organizational value across the industrial landscape (Langerak, 2001; Reicheld and Sasser, 1990). Accordingly, we argue that when organizational identification is high, salespeople will regard customer-oriented selling as an important activity, which in turn shapes their belief that they will experience the feeling of accomplishment upon successful completion of this activity. Consequently, we expect that organizational identification will intrinsically motivate salespeople to engage in customer orientation.

On the basis of this expected positive main effect of organizational identification, we argue that when high

organizational identification is coupled with high experienced meaningfulness, each will reinforce the positive effect of the other on the salesperson’s intrinsic motivation to expend the effort that is required by customer orientation. Since our conceptual framework is predicted upon JCM (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), we establish organizational identification as the moderator of the focal main effect. Based on the preceding, we predict,

**H2a:** Organizational identification will be positively related to customer orientation.

**H2b:** The strength of the positive relationship between experienced meaningfulness and customer orientation will increase with increasing levels of organizational identification.

### 2.5. Pay satisfaction: main and moderator effects

Pay satisfaction refers to the positive affective evaluation of the magnitude of the reward that is received in exchange for the investment of effort (Churchill et al., 1974; Walker et al., 1977). The greater the magnitude of the reward that is received, the greater is the salesperson’s ability to obtain valued outcomes. Thus, whereas experienced meaningfulness and organizational identification motivate salesperson effort by enhancing the feeling of accomplishment, pay satisfaction motivates salesperson effort by enabling the salesperson to pursue valued outcomes (Lawler, 1971, 1973). Accordingly, we expect a positive main effect of pay satisfaction customer orientation (see also Chebat et al., 2002).

When high pay satisfaction is coupled with high experienced meaningfulness, we expect that salesperson motivation to engage in customer orientation will be enhanced because they receive both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards in exchange for effort investment. Consequently, based upon JCM (Hackman and Oldham, 1980), we argue that when pay satisfaction is high, the positive relationship between experienced meaningfulness and salesperson motivation to expend the effort that is required by customer orientation will be enhanced. Accordingly, we propose,

**H3a:** Pay satisfaction will be positively related to customer orientation.

**H3b:** The strength of the positive relationship between experienced meaningfulness and customer orientation will increase with increasing levels of pay satisfaction.

### 2.6. Controls

Prior research has found some support for the effects of gender and job tenure on customer on customer orientation (O’Hara et al., 1991). The type of compensation received (salary vs. commission) is also a frequently studied variable in sales research (e.g., Cravens et al., 1993). Accordingly,

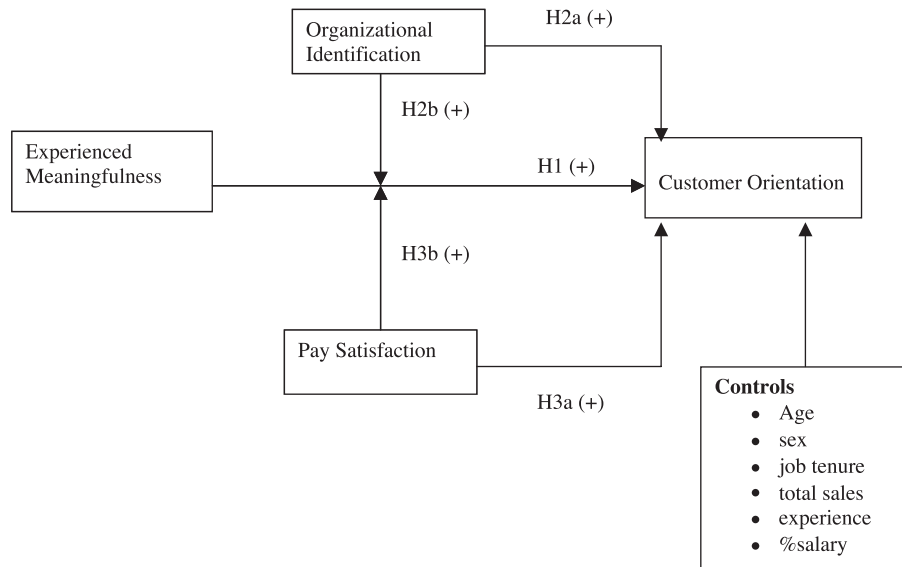


Fig. 1. Experienced meaningfulness of the job and salesperson customer orientation: moderating effects of organizational identification and pay satisfaction.

we control for the effects of the following variables on customer orientation: age, sex, job tenure, overall sales experience, and salary as a percentage of the average salesperson's total income.

Our research hypotheses are captured pictorially in Fig. 1.

### 3. Method

The sampling frame comprised industrial salespeople who were alumni of a major university in the Midwest region of the United States. A three-stage mailing process was used to collect the data. The purpose of the first mailing was to inform respondents that a questionnaire would be sent to them shortly and to request their participation. A football schedule was enclosed with the letter to engender good will, and alumni were offered a management summary of the results as an inducement to participate. Two weeks later, a package containing the questionnaire, a covering letter, a reply prepaid envelope, and a university decal was mailed to the respondents. The third mailing comprised of reminder postcards that emphasized the importance of the research project and reiterated the availability of management summaries of research findings. This was sent out 2 weeks after the second mailing. Of the 994 packages that were sent out in the second mailing, 302 were returned. Of these, 21 were determined to be unusable because of failure to follow instructions. Thus, the effective sample size was 281, representing a response rate of 28.3%. This response rate compares favorably to response rates of 27% (Yilmaz and Hunt, 2001) and 16.9% (Siguaw et al., 1994) reported in recent studies using salesperson samples.

We tracked responses on a daily basis and our analysis of this data showed a continuous pattern of responses for 17 days after the first response arrived ( $n = 238$ ), followed by a

break and a resumption of responses ( $n = 58$ ). We treated this naturally occurring break as a discriminator between early and late respondents. In order to test for nonresponse bias, we compared the early-versus-late respondents on sex, age, sales experience, tenure with current employer, and annual income and found no statistically significant differences between the two groups. This pattern of results mitigates the threat of a nonresponse bias (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). The typical respondent in the sample was male, between 25 and 35 years of age, with 6 years of sales experience, four of those being with the current employer and whose annual income was less than US\$50,000.

#### 3.1. Measures

Scale items were developed from reviewing prior literature and were refined through insights gleaned from 14 exploratory interviews that we did with sales professionals. We then submitted the measures to a pretest with a small sample ( $n = 38$ ) of sales professionals. Items with weak item-to-total correlations were eliminated or modified prior to inclusion in the final instrument. All the theoretical constructs in the model (Fig. 1) were measured using multiple-item seven-point (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) scales. Scale reliabilities and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. The appendix contains the factor loadings and other results of the confirmatory factor analysis. We now turn to a discussion of the properties of the individual scales.

##### 3.1.1. Customer orientation

We created a five-item scale of customer orientation by adapting relevant items from the existing Saxe and Weitz (1982) scale. Adaptations to the customer orientation scale such as those proposed in our study are reported in prior

Table 1  
Correlations<sup>a</sup> and descriptive statistics of model variables<sup>b</sup>

| Variables                        | 1               | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | 6    | 7    | 8    | 9    |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. Age of salesperson            | 1.00            |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 2. Sex of salesperson            | -.22            | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 3. Tenure                        | .31             | -.09 | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 4. Total selling experience      | .48             | -.06 | .26  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |      |
| 5. Percentage of salary          | .16             | .05  | .21  | .10  | 1.00 |      |      |      |      |
| 6. Experienced meaningfulness    | .13             | .19  | .17  | .08  | .23  | 1.00 |      |      |      |
| 7. Organizational identification | .04             | .22  | .22  | .01  | .27  | .22  | 1.00 |      |      |
| 8. Pay satisfaction              | -.21            | .16  | .11  | -.09 | .14  | .20  | .14  | 1.00 |      |
| 9. Customer orientation          | -.09            | .03  | .08  | .05  | .19  | .39  | .27  | .17  | 1.00 |
| Means <sup>c</sup>               | 2.05            | NA   | 2.21 | 3.13 | 4.26 | 3.94 | 3.80 | 3.31 | 3.03 |
| S.D.                             | 0.61            | NA   | 2    | 2.3  | 3.12 | 0.82 | 0.68 | 1.23 | 1.81 |
| No. of items                     | 1               | 1    | 1    | 1    | 1    | 7    | 8    | 6    | 5    |
| Construct reliability            | NA <sup>d</sup> | NA   | NA   | NA   | NA   | .86  | .80  | .76  | .88  |

<sup>a</sup> All correlations greater than .15 are statistically significant ( $P < .05$ , two tailed) for  $n = 281$ .

<sup>b</sup> All scale items are measured on seven-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

<sup>c</sup> Mean values prior to centering.

<sup>d</sup> NA = not appropriate.

published research (e.g., Brown et al., 2002; Cravens et al., 1993).

### 3.1.2. Experienced meaningfulness

We used the Intrinsic Job Cognition Scale developed by Williams (1988) to measure experienced meaningfulness. We used this scale because of its strong face validity in relation to the definition of experienced meaningfulness.

### 3.1.3. Organizational identification

Since identification is commonly regarded as being at the core of the commitment construct (Allen and Meyer, 1990 p. 1; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226; Porter et al., 1974), we adapted the OCQ (Mowday et al., 1979) to construct a seven-item scale of organizational identification. Note that adapted versions of OCQ have been reported in prior published research (e.g., Singh et al., 1996, p. 75).

### 3.1.4. Pay satisfaction

Pay satisfaction refers to the affective evaluation of the salesperson to the pay that they receive over a period of time in exchange for their effort investment. We adapted six items from a prevalidated scale that measures pay satisfaction (Churchill et al., 1974; see also Comer et al., 1989).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement analysis

Following convention (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988), we used a two-stage procedure to validate the measures. First, we examined the data to identify ill-fitting items using exploratory procedures such as item-to-total correlations and exploratory factor analysis. Having deleted items that exhibited low item-to-total correlations and/or those that exhibited high

cross loadings in the factor analysis, we submitted the remaining items to a confirmatory factor analysis.

The confirmatory factor analytic model comprised of 25 items and 4 constructs, with each item being restricted to load on a particular construct while the constructs were left free to correlate with each other. Although the overall chi-square of our measurement model is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 522.13$ ,  $df = 269$ ,  $P < .05$ ), the other measures of fit

Table 2  
Estimated regression model

| Independent variables  | Dependent variable   |                    |
|--|--|--------------------|
|  | Customer orientation: standardized coefficient (one-tailed $t$ , $P$ values) | Hypotheses         |
| Age of salesperson (X1)  | -.06 ( $t = -0.97$ , $P > .10$ )   |                    |
| Sex of salesperson (X2)  | .01 ( $t = 0.21$ , $P > .10$ )   |                    |
| Tenure (X3)  | .06 ( $t = 0.78$ , $P > .10$ )   |                    |
| Experience (X4)  | .03 ( $t = 0.27$ , $P > .10$ )   |                    |
| Percentage of salary (X5)  | .17 ( $t = 1.97$ , $P < .05$ )   |                    |
| Experienced meaningfulness (X6)  | .31 ( $t = 3.46$ , $P < .01$ )   | H1: Supported      |
| Organizational identification (X7)                                     | .26 ( $t = 3.01$ , $P < .01$ )   | H2a: Supported     |
| Pay satisfaction (X8)  | .13 ( $t = 1.63$ , $P < .10$ )   | H3a: Not supported |
| Experienced Meaningfulness $\times$ Organizational Identification (X9) | .29 ( $t = 3.14$ , $P < .01$ )   | H2b: Supported     |
| Experienced Meaningfulness $\times$ Pay Satisfaction (X10)             | .18 ( $t = 2.02$ , $P < .05$ )   | H3b: Supported     |
| $r^2$  | .36  |                    |
| Adjusted $r^2$   | .32  |                    |

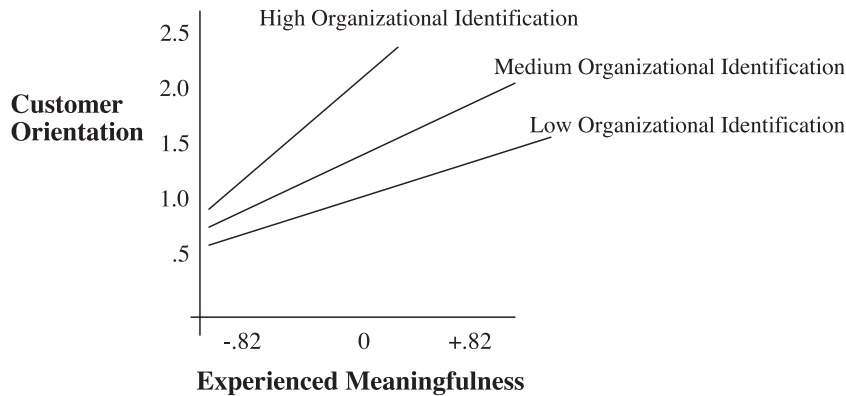


Fig. 2. Conditional effect of experienced meaningfulness at three levels of organizational identification.

[average off-diagonal standard residual (AOSR)=.04; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)=.04; non-normed fit index (NNFI)=.93; and comparative fit index (CFI)=.93] show evidence of a good fit of the model to the data. The loadings of all of the items on the constructs were statistically significant at  $P < .01$  (two tailed). Additionally, the average construct reliability (Hair et al., 1998, p. 665) of all scales was .82, with a range from .76 to .88. This pattern of results provides confirmatory evidence for the convergent validity of the measures. Scale items and their standardized loadings are listed in Appendix A and scale statistics (mean, standard deviation, and construct reliability) are presented in Table 1.

We used nested model comparisons (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988) to assess discriminant validity of the constructs. In all six instances, the fit of the alternate model was poorer than that of the free model (difference in  $\chi^2 = 17$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $P < .01$  was the lowest difference). This pattern of results provides confirmatory evidence for the discriminant validity of our measures.

Finally, we tested for common methods bias using the procedures recommended by Podsakoff and Organ (1986). Results from a principal components factor analysis showed that there was more than 1 factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 and that the first factor only accounted for 37.5% of the total variance explained, which was 81.9%. Thus, there is no evidence to support the existence of common methods bias in the data.

#### 4.2. Hypothesis testing

Having ascertained the validity of the multi-item scales, the scale items were summed to create indices that were used in hypothesis testing. We tested the hypotheses using moderator regression analysis. Given that this procedure involves entering both main effects and their interaction terms into the regression equation, the potential for multicollinearity is high. We used the mean centering procedure recommended by Aiken and West (1991) to reduce the possibility of this problem. Examination of the variance

inflation factors for the regression equation showed that none exceeded the value of 2.5, which is well below the multicollinearity indicating value of 10 (Neter et al., 1990).

As shown in Table 2, with the exception of H3a, all the hypotheses were supported at the  $P < .05$  or lower. We explored the results for the interaction effects (see X9 and X10 in Table 2) further by estimating the slope of the regression of customer orientation on experienced meaningfulness at three levels of each moderator (i.e., organizational identification and pay satisfaction). The results for X9 indicate that organizational identification enhances the effect of experienced meaningfulness on customer orientation. In order to illustrate this, we plot the interaction by estimating the slope of the regression of customer orientation on experienced meaningfulness at three levels of the moderator (i.e., organizational identification). Results from the Aiken and West (1991) interaction plotting procedures are presented in Figs. 2 and 3 (for applications of this procedure in the sales management literature, see Ahearne

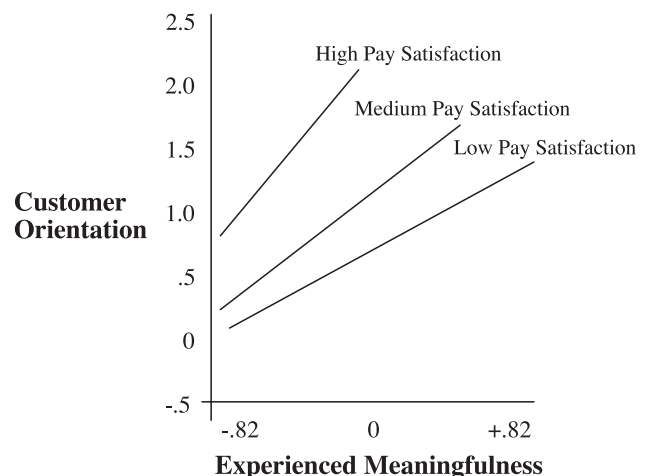


Fig. 3. Conditional effect of experienced meaningfulness at three levels of pay satisfaction.

and Gruen, 1999; Ramaswami, 1996). The slope of the regression of customer orientation on experienced meaningfulness is steeper in the high organizational identification condition than in the low organizational identification condition, thereby supporting H2b (see Fig. 2). Similarly, consistent with our prediction in H3b, Fig. 3 shows that the slope of the regression of customer orientation on experienced meaningfulness is steeper in the high pay satisfaction condition than in the low pay satisfaction condition.

## 5. Discussion

Because it involves greater salesperson effort in customer-related interactions relative to sales orientation, customer orientation requires the salesperson to be motivated to engage in this mode of selling. In this research, we drew from JCM to identify both intrinsic (experienced meaningfulness and organizational identification) and extrinsic (pay satisfaction) motivators of customer orientation and to establish interrelationships among these motivators. Consistent with the predictions from JCM, research results show that the salesperson's experienced meaningfulness of their job has a positive impact on their customer orientation (H1) and that their identification with organizational values (H2b) and their satisfaction with the pay they receive (H3b) enhance this impact. These results provide empirical validation for JCM as an explanatory framework for customer orientation.

The moderating effects of organizational identification and pay satisfaction were proposed on the basis of positive main effects of these constructs on customer orientation. Research results show that while organizational identification had a positive main effect on customer orientation (H2a), the effect of pay satisfaction was positive but not statistically significant (H3a). Thus, the increased ability to procure valued outcomes is not by itself sufficient to motivate salespeople to expend the effort that is required by customer orientation. When this increased ability is coupled with the feeling of accomplishment, however, the effect of ability to procure valued outcomes as a motivator becomes evident. Thus, our results identify an important boundary condition for the effect of extrinsic motivators on effort expenditure.

### 5.1. Theoretical implications

We examined customer orientation from the perspective of JCM in this research. Accordingly, our research has implications for both bodies of knowledge. Our research contributes to the customer orientation literature by identifying the job itself, or more particularly, the salesperson's affective evaluation of their job, as a key determinant of customer orientation. Further, our research shows that the conventional determinants of customer orientation such as

salesperson affective evaluation of their organizational characteristics (Boles et al., 2001; Sigauw et al., 1994) and pay (Chebat et al., 2002; Walker et al., 1977) serve as moderators of the effect of job-induced affect on customer orientation. With respect to JCM, our research contributes by extending this model to a new empirical domain, namely, to the study of customer-oriented selling behavior by salespeople. Research results provide additional evidence for the generalizability of this model.

The relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivators has been the subject of debate in prior research on motivation. Whereas some regard these as complementary (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Lawler, 1973), others regard them as substitutes (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Results from our research show that the extrinsic motivator (namely, pay satisfaction) enhances the effect of the intrinsic motivator (namely, experienced meaningfulness) on customer orientation. Accordingly, the key implication arising from our research for the motivation literature is that it provides evidence for the thesis that the two types of motivators are complementary.

### 5.2. Managerial implications

Sales managers have to ensure that salespeople expend effort in developing and maintaining customer relationships over time. Our research is of significance to sales managers because it identifies three key salesperson psychological states that foster salesperson motivation to expend effort in these activities. Of the three psychological states—experienced meaningfulness, organizational identification, and pay satisfaction—our research shows that experienced meaningfulness is the strongest determinant of customer orientation (Table 2). This result highlights the managerial importance of ensuring that salespeople find their work as meaningful. Managers can foster experienced meaningfulness among salespeople by providing them with greater variety in their job (e.g., different types of accounts, periodic rotation of accounts among salespeople) and by expanding the scope of their job from being an order getter to being the deliverer of service to customers (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). Further, our results highlight the importance of ensuring pay satisfaction among salespeople as this enhances the effect of experienced meaningfulness on customer motivation. Managers can foster pay satisfaction by providing a competitive level of pay and by ensuring fairness in pay management (Chebat et al., 2002; Lawler, 1973).

However, in many instances, managers may be constrained from taking actions to alter job variety or job scope. Consider job rotation: senior management, customers, and salespeople may all oppose this practice on the grounds that it potentially disrupts effective working relationships between salespeople and their customers. What is a manager to do in such a situation? Our research identifies the development of organizational identification among salespeople as

an additional avenue that a manager can explore in order to enhance customer orientation. Given that salespeople are in the field for the most part, their manager becomes representative of the organization. By employing considerate leader behaviors (Boles et al., 2001) and by providing regular and constructive feedback (Jaworski and Kohli, 1991), the sales manager can enhance the salesperson's identification with the organization. Since these actions (i.e., considerate leader behaviors and provision of feedback) are directly in the manager's control, the manager can employ them to compensate for their inability to enhance experienced meaningfulness.

### 5.3. Limitations and future research

The implications of our research should be evaluated alongside caveats pertaining to research design, data collection, and theory. First, in terms of research design, recall that we used a cross-sectional design and as such are unable to establish a causal sequence between experienced meaningfulness and customer orientation. Second, with respect to data collection, note that individual salespeople provided data on both the independent and dependent variables. Such a practice creates the potential for same-source bias. While our statistical tests do not show evidence for such a bias, research that collects data from different individuals for different model variables is definitely more desirable. Finally, our conceptual framework does not account for other possible moderators such as salesperson personality characteristics such as extroversion (Stewart, 1996) and self-esteem (Sujan et al., 1994) of the experienced meaningfulness customer orientation relationship. Undoubtedly, more theoretical and empirical work is necessary to understand the effects of affective evaluations on customer orientation.

## Appendix A

### Scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

Experienced meaningfulness (source: adapted from Williams, 1988) (CR=.86)

1. My job lets me have the chance to be somebody (SL=.93).
2. My job gives me a feeling of accomplishment (SL=.81).
3. My job lets me make full use of my abilities (SL=.95).
4. My job allows me to have control over my life (SL=.93).
5. My job is exciting and challenging (SL=.76).
6. My job allows me to grow and develop as a person (SL=.91).
7. My job is mostly comprised of selling (e.g., making sales presentations) rather than servicing customers (SL=.79).

Organizational identification (source: adapted from Porter et al., 1974) (CR=.80)

1. I talk about this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for (SL=.84).
2. I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar (SL=.76).
3. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization (SL=.83).

## Appendix A (continued)

### Scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

4. I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for, over others I was considering at the time I joined (SL=.76).
5. Often, I find it hard to agree with this organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees (reverse) (SL=.73).
6. I really care about the future of this organization (SL=.79).
7. For me, this is the best of all possible organizations to work for (SL=.86).

Pay satisfaction (adapted from Comer et al., 1989) (CR=.76)

1. I am satisfied with my pay (SL=.88).
2. My pay is high in comparison with what others get for similar work in other companies (SL=.74).
3. I'm very much underpaid for the work that I do (reverse code) (SL=.71).
4. My pay adequately reflects my performance (SL=.78).
5. It would be difficult for me to find another job that provided me with better pay (SL=.79).
6. The pay I receive is appropriate for the work I do (SL=.79).

Customer orientation (adapted from Saxe and Weitz, 1982) (CR=.88)

1. I try to determine how I can best help the customer solve his/her problem (SL=.94).
2. I always present the customer with a realistic picture of what my firm's products can do (SL=.87).
3. I spend much of my time listening to the customer talk about his/her firm's needs (SL=.93).
4. I wait until I fully understand the customer's needs before making my sales presentation (SL=.78).
5. I am always candid in discussions with my customers (SL=.77).

Measurement model statistics

$\chi^2 = 522.13$ ,  $df = 269$ ,  $P < .05$ ; AOSR=.04; RMSEA=.04; normed fit index [NFI]=.91; NNFI=.93; CFI=.93.

Controls

Salesperson age

What is your age? 1 = under 25 years; 2 = 25 to 35 years; 3 = 35 to 45 years; 4 = 45 to 55 years; 6 = over 55.

Salesperson sales experience

How many years sales experience do you have in all? \_\_\_\_\_ years (recoded as 1 = less than 1 year; 2 = 1–5 years; 3 = 6 to 10 years; 4 = 11 to 15 years; 5 = 15+)

Salesperson tenure

How long have you worked for your company? \_\_\_\_\_ years (recoded as 1 = less than 1 year; 2 = 1–5 years; 3 = 6 to 10 years; 4 = 11 to 15 years; 5 = 15+)

Sex

What is your sex? Male = 1; Female = 2

Percentage of salary

What percentage of the average salesperson's income is derived from salary? \_\_\_\_\_ (recoded as 1 = less than 10%; 2 = 10% to less than 25%; 3 = 25% to 50%; 4 = 50% to less than 75%; 5 = 75% and greater)

CR = Construct reliability; SL = standardized loading.

## References

- Ahearne M, Gruen TW. If looks could sell: moderation and mediation of the attractiveness effect on salesperson performance. *Int J Res Mark* 1999;16:269–84.
- Aiken LS, West SG. Multiple regression: testing and interpreting interactions. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage; 1991.
- Allen NJ, Meyer JP. The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization. *J Occup Psychol* 1990;63:1–18.

- Anderson JC, Gerbing DW. Structural equation modeling in practice: a review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychol Bull* 1988;103(3): 411–23.
- Armstrong JS, Overton TS. Estimating non-response bias in mail surveys. *J Mark Res* 1977;14(August):369–402.
- Ashforth BE, Mael F. Social identity theory and the organization. *Acad Manage Rev* 1989;14(1):20–39.
- Boles JS, Babin BJ, Brashear TG, Brooks C. An examination of the relationship between retail work environments, salesperson selling orientation-customer orientation and job performance. *J Mark Theory Pract Summer* 2001;9(Summer):1–13.
- Brady MK, Cronin Jr J. Customer orientation: effects of customer service perceptions and outcome behaviors. *J Serv Res* 2001;3(3):241–51.
- Brown SP, Cron WL, Leigh TW. Do feelings of success mediate sales performance-work attitude relationships? *J Acad Mark Sci* 1993; 21(2): 91–100.
- Brown TJ, Mowen JC, Donavan DT, Licata JW. The customer orientation of service workers: personality trait effects on self- and supervisor performance ratings. *J Mark Res* 2002;34(February): 110–9.
- Chebat J-C, Babin B, Kollias K. What makes contact employees perform? reactions to employee perceptions of managerial practices. *Int J Bank Mark* 2002;20(7):325–32.
- Churchill G, Ford NM, Walker OC. Measuring the job satisfaction of industrial salesmen. *J Mark Res* 1974;11(August):254–60.
- Comer JM, Machleit KA, Lagace RR. Psychometric assessment of a reduced version of INDSALES. *J Bus Res* 1989;18:291–302.
- Cravens DW, Ingram TN, LaFroge RW, Young CE. Behavior-based and outcome-based salesforce control systems. *J Mark* 1993;57(October): 47–59.
- Deci EL, Ryan RM. Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. New York: Plenum; 1985.
- Dutton JE, Dukerich JM, Harquail CV. Organizational images and member identification. *Adm. Sci. Q.* 1994;39(June):239–63.
- Eby LT, Freeman DM, Rush MC, Lance CE. Motivational bases of affective organizational commitment: a partial test of an integrative theoretical model. *J Occup Organ Psychol* 1999;72(4):463–83.
- Goff BG, Boles JS, Bellenger DN, Stojack C. The influence of salesperson selling behaviors on customer satisfaction with products. *J Retail* 1997;73(2):171–83.
- Hackman JR, Oldham GR. Work redesign. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing; 1980.
- Hair Jr JF, Anderson RE, Tatham RL, Black WC. Multivariate data analysis. 5th ed. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall; 1998.
- Hall DT. Careers in organizations. Pacific Palisades (CA): Goodyear; 1976.
- Jaworski BJ, Kohli AK. Supervisory feedback: alternative types and their impact on salespeople's performance and satisfaction. *J Mark Res* 1991;28(May):190–201.
- John G. An empirical investigation of some antecedents of opportunism in a marketing channel. *J Mark Res* 1984;21(August):278–89.
- Johns G, Xie JL, Fang Y. Mediating and moderating effects in job design. *J Manage* 1992;18(4):657–76.
- Kelley SW. Developing customer orientation among service employees. *J Acad Mark Sci* 1992;20(Winter):27–36.
- Langerak F. Effects of market orientation on the behavior of salespersons and purchasers, channel relationships, and performance of manufacturers. *Int J Res Mark* 2001;18:221–34.
- Lawler EE. Pay and organizational effectiveness: a psychological view. New York: McGraw-Hill; 1971.
- Lawler, EE Motivation in work organizations. Monterey (CA): Brooks/Cole; 1973.
- Mael F, Ashforth BE. Alumni and their Alma Mater: a partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *J Organ Behav* 1992;13:103–23.
- Mathieu JE, Zajac DM. A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment. *Psychol Bull* 1990;108:171–94.
- Mowday RT, Porter LW, Steers RM. The measurement of organizational commitment. *J Vocat Behav* 1979;14:224–7.
- Neter J, Wasserman W, Kutner MH. Applied linear statistical models: regression, analysis of variance, and experimental designs. 3rd ed. Richard D. Irwin; 1990.
- O'Hara B, Boles JS, Johnston MW. The influence of personal variables on salesperson selling orientation. *J Pers Sell Sales Manage* 1991;11(Winter):61–7.
- Podsakoff PM, Organ D. Self-reports in organizational research: problems and prospects. *J Manage* 1986;12(Winter):531–43.
- Porter LW, Steers RM, Mowday RT, Boulian PV. Organizational commitment, job satisfaction and turnover among psychiatric technicians. *J Appl Psychol* 1974;59(5):603–9.
- Ramaswami SN. Marketing controls and dysfunctional employee behaviors: a test of traditional and contingency theory postulates. *J Mark* 1996;60(April):105–20.
- Reicheld FF, Sasser WE. Zero defections: quality comes to services. *Harvard Bus Rev* 1990;68(September–October):105–11.
- Renn RW, Vandenberg RJ. The critical psychological states: an underrepresented component in job characteristics model research. *J Manage* 1995;21(2):279–303.
- Saxe R, Weitz BA. The SOCO scale: a measure of the customer orientation of salespeople. *J Mark Res* 1982;19(August):343–51.
- Siguaw JA, Brown G, Widing III RE. The influence of the market orientation of the firm on sales force behavior and attitudes. *J Mark Res* 1994;31(February):106–16.
- Singh J, Verbeke W, Rhoads GK. Do organizational practices matter in role stress processes? A study of direct and moderating effects for marketing-oriented boundary spanners. *J Mark* 1996;60(July):69–86.
- Spiro RL, Weitz BA. Adaptive selling: conceptualization, measurement, and nomological validity. *J. Mark. Res.* 1990;27(February):61–9.
- Stewart GL. Reward structure as a moderator of the relationship between extraversion and sales performance. *J Appl Psychol* 1996; 81(6):619–27.
- Sujan H, Weitz BA, Kumar N. Learning orientation, working smart, and effective selling. *J Mark* 1994;58(July):39–52.
- Walker Jr OC, Churchill Jr GA, Ford NM. Motivation and performance in industrial selling: present knowledge and needed research. *J Mark Res* 1977;14(May):156–68.
- Williams LJ. Affective and nonaffective components of job satisfaction and organizational commitment as determinants of organizational citizenship and in-role behaviors. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University; 1988.
- Yilmaz C, Hunt SD. Salesperson cooperation: the influence of relational, task, organizational, and personal factors. *J Acad Mark Sci* 2001; 29(4):335–57.